

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



3 1761 04335 2137

OXILIUM INFIRMORUM

REV. R. EATON

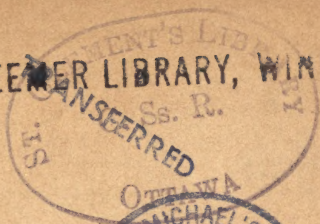
# JOHN M. KELLY LIBRARY



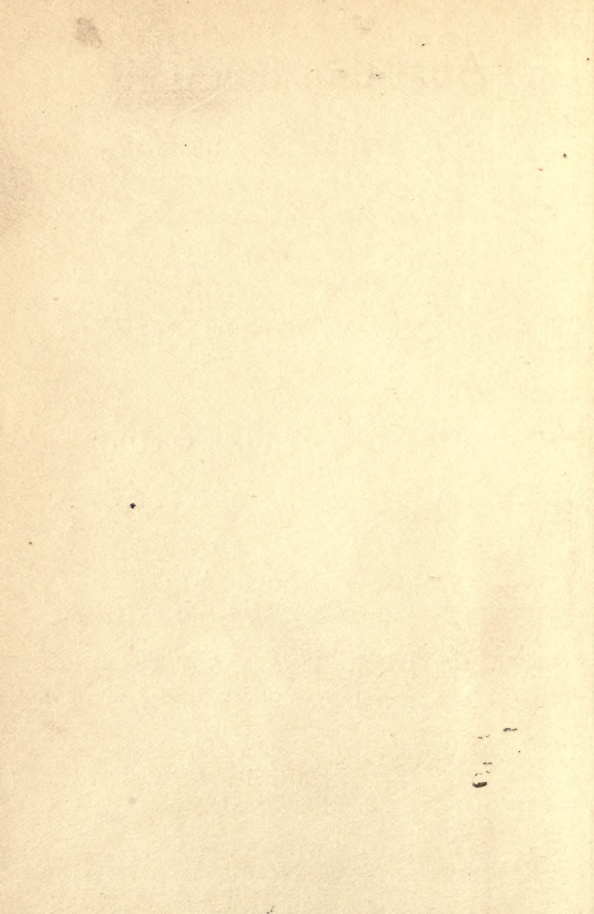
Donated by  
**The Redemptorists of  
the Toronto Province**  
from the Library Collection of  
Holy Redeemer College, Windsor

University of  
St. Michael's College, Toronto

HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY, WINDSOR



AUXILIUM INFIRMORUM





## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

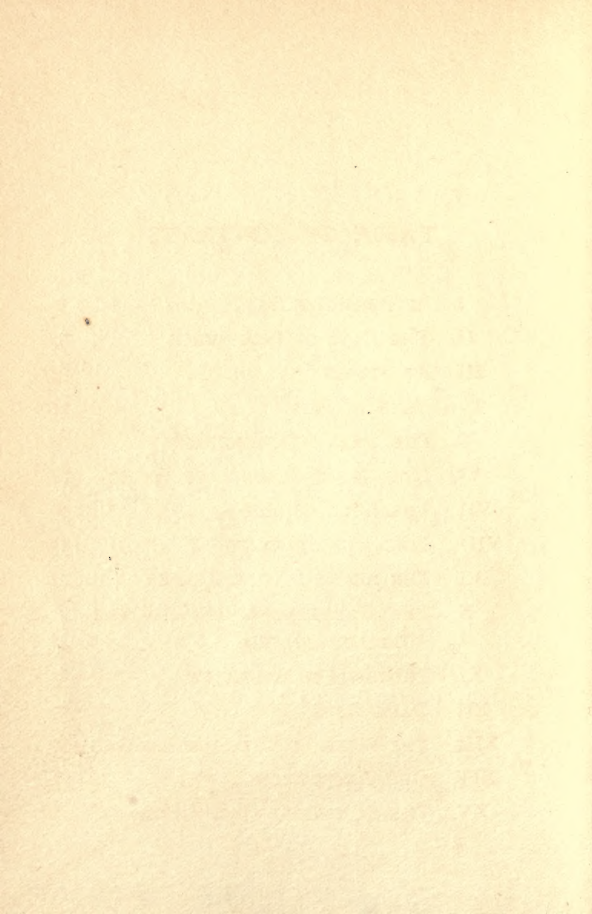
41  
2969 mclung  
THESE papers were for the most part written some years ago, to help one who at length crowned a painful illness of eight years' duration by a death precious in the sight of God. They are now published in her memory, and at her request, for she wished that what had proved of use to her, might help others also. They make no attempt at system or completeness, and merely seek to illustrate some of the phases and trials of the times of sickness, and to encourage those who suffer and mourn to make all things work together for good, exercising in fullest measure the difficult apostleship of pain entrusted to them by our Lord.

R. E.

THE ORATORY,  
BIRMINGHAM,

*Feast of All Saints, 1908.*

TRANScribed  
HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY WINDSOR



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. AT BREAK OF DAY. . . . .	I
II. THE DAYS OF PILGRIMAGE . . . . .	4
III. AT SUNSET . . . . .	8
IV. YOUR MISSION . . . . .	14
V. THE DAYS OF COMMUNION . . . . .	18
VI. LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT . . . . .	24
VII. THE LOVE OF GOD . . . . .	29
VIII. TIME AND ETERNITY . . . . .	35
IX. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN . . . . .	40
X. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD THE LIFE OF PRAYER . . . . .	48
XI. THOUGHTS IN CAPTIVITY . . . . .	53
XII. DARK DAYS . . . . .	57
XIII. THE WORK OF THE SICK FOR GOD . . . . .	66
XIV. OUR TEMPTATIONS . . . . .	73
XV. THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR . . . . .	76

	PAGE
XVI. WHY ART THOU SAD, O MY SOUL ?	83
XVII. GOD'S CHOICE OF ME . . . .	86
XVIII. DIFFICULTIES AT PRAYER . . .	89
XIX. THE SHEPHERDS . . . . .	94
XX. THE KINGS . . . . .	104
XXI. THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY .	112
XXII. AFTER AN ILLNESS . . . . .	117
XXIII. RELIGION PURE AND UNDEFILED .	121
XXIV. THE TOMB OF OUR LORD . . . .	126
XXV. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS .	130
XXVI. THE APPARITION AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS . . . . .	137
XXVII. THE VISITS OF OUR LORD . . .	140
XXVIII. SUNDAY WITHOUT MASS . . . .	144
XXIX. ON THE BRIDGE . . . . .	148
XXX. THE BETTER PART . . . . .	149
XXXI. A NIGHT THOUGHT . . . . .	151
XXXII. THE HOLY NAME . . . . .	153
XXXIII. THE SORROWS OF OUR LADY .	158
XXXIV. WORDS ON PRAYER . . . . .	171
XXXV. HOLDING FAST . . . . .	184
XXXVI. SOME PRAYERS . . . . .	191

# Auxilium Infirmorum

## I

### At Break of Day

WHEN the long night-watch of the first Holy Saturday drew to its close, the holy women, laden with sweet and carefully prepared spices, started out to embalm the body of our Divine Lord. It was a work of love for which there had been no time in the darkness of Good Friday night, but now that the great Sabbath day is over, they go with joy to fulfil their task. On the way to the holy sepulchre an obstacle, apparently insuperable to the performance of what they so ardently desired, came to their minds. "Who shall roll us back the

stone from the mouth of the tomb?" they ask, for they cannot roll it back themselves, as it is very great. Generous souls! they had not reckoned with their difficulties, nor summoned others to help them! Yet, looking, they saw the stone rolled back in the light of the sun now risen, and emblems of victory around on every side, and angels from heaven to speak words of comfort to them.

This is among the loveliest and greatest of the Gospel scenes; is there any light from it for the sick and desolate at break of day? Let us see.

The break of day is a time of mingled joy and sorrow to the sick; of joy that the long, still night is over, of sorrow or anxiety because another day of pain and weariness has perchance to be faced. "I am glad the night is over," you say, "but how shall I get through to-day?" Yet you are quite ready to work for our Lord; if He calls you to it, you will not refuse. Set forth, then, on your journey, now that the sun has risen, laden with the spices



of your pains both of mind and body, made sweet by your good-will and generosity, to anoint the Body of the Lord Jesus—yes, to anoint the Church, which is His Body, to enrich her and heal her wounds, by bringing many a blessing on her children.

Make this morning-offering to our Lord with all the joy and generous love of the holy women ; be not affrighted by the great stone of your weakness, which seems to prevent your doing anything for our Lord. That shall surely be rolled away in due time by His strong hand, for He chooses weakness to confound the strong and to put down the mighty from their seat. How grand a beginning you have thus made to your day !

To-day shall indeed be an Easter Day of victory for you, and all around shall be seen the emblems of your victory over nature, over self, over sin, over difficulty. It shall be a day full of faith and hope in God, full of trust that out of darkness He brings light, out of weakness strength, out

of failure victory. And your angel shall say to you of to-day : " Fear not, you have sought Jesus who was crucified ; He is risen, He is not here, and you have risen with Him, and have sought the things that are above, and are not where self-love would have laid you." If you suffer with Him to-day, you shall reign with Him hereafter.

## II

### The Days of Pilgrimage

VANITY of vanities and all is vanity, but to love and serve God. Each day of our pilgrimage must then be sanctified by prayer, by victory over self, by simple duties done all for God. Without religion, life is the veriest sham and not worth the living ; but with its lights and consolations, we are able to realize how glorious it is to have been created at all, to have been given the gift of life, and to

rest assured that a gift so precious, so eternal, could not have been given without some great end in view—and that end is God ! The pilgrimage must be a prelude to the eternity.

Now, to serve God is to obey God, and our obedience must be one of love, the obedience of children, not of slaves. Always be true to yourself. What does your heart desire but God ? He has been so generous to you, yet what He has done is but a beginning ; He has infinitely more in store, and He wants yet more from you, for He is a jealous God. He wants your *whole* life : will you, then, give it to Him for the furtherance of His cause, or will you keep back a portion for yourself ? Try to realize the evil of wilful sin, and maintain a stout but cheerful fight with self. Great government of the tongue, of temper, of thought and feeling—these are the things that are to your peace. But they are the work of a lifetime, not of a day. Do not, therefore, attack them in a fevered,

excited way, else you become like one beating the air ; but work quietly and with calm, and if there be failure or shortcomings, as doubtless there will be, let there be at once full and humble confession, a turning to God afresh, with a contrite heart, as to a Father of mercy who knows your frame and remembers your weakness, but never despises one of His little ones.

Above all, let there be no discouragement, no sadness, for these come straight from the evil one and spoil the work of God in your soul. At times our Lord will "make as though He would go further," and will seem to ask for much ; do not then be troubled, but remember that it is His way of dealing with the souls He loves, exercising them in generosity and in trust, for we never honour our Lord so truly as when we trust Him to the full. Let yourself go gladly with the stream of grace ; do not resist its onward force, for it carries you smoothly along to a land where self-love is unknown, and where

all is seen as with the eyes of our Lord. Ever look more to God than to yourself, resting in the thought of God's love and care for you, dwelling far more on His goodness to you than on the sins you have committed against Him. Leave the past safely in His keeping, be glad to part with it as He bids you do, and go on your way rejoicing.

Be merry withal, and rejoice in the Lord, for the Lord is nigh to them that are clean and contrite of heart, and He loveth the cheerful giver. Let gratitude to God colour all your service of Him, for a love of gratitude is a love that lasts and grows. Let your soul bless the Lord, and never forget all that He hath done for you. Indeed, you could not rest your service on any basis more true and sure than on the knowledge and realization of what God has done for you personally, on the special providence He has extended to you, screening you from dangers, enriching you with blessings, above all by giving you a call which is above every call—the

call to know and embrace the truth, to follow its clear light and be nourished with its strong food. Dwell much on this, and gladly recall to mind the many solid proofs you have that God has loved you, has thought of you, has worked for you, has sought for you. Thus has He drawn you to Himself.

May all this help you in your daily work and pain, bidding you give all to God, bear all for God, bless all for God, till death shall come and the days of pilgrimage are over, and your place be found amid the spirits of the just made perfect in the new Jerusalem, the city of God.

### III

#### At Sunset

“WHY, O Lord, are they multiplied that afflict me? why am I consumed, holding my peace? Why hast Thou forgotten me, O God, and why do I go mourning,



whilst my enemy afflicts me ? Why doth the way of the wicked prosper ? why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly ? Why, O Lord, will Thou forsake us for a long time ? I am become burdensome to myself. Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord ? arise, and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away, and forgettest our want and our trouble ? O God, my God, look upon me, for I am poured out like water, and all my bones are scattered.”

Have not questions such as these vexed your mind, and feelings such as these made your heart sore to-day ? God has seemed so far away, work for God so devoid of sweetness, enemies so troublesome, and you have felt alone, and on the day's story there is written that little word, “Why ?” Yes, on the story of to-day it stands out as boldly as it was stamped on the story of the first Good Friday, when One, who did no sin and in whose mouth no guile was found, cried with a loud voice : “My God, My God,

why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet through this day you have tried to keep close to God, never doubting of His truth, never flinching from your cross, never wavering in your loyalty.

Your crucifix has been your help to-day, the thought and sight of Jesus Christ and Him crucified ; and is not the same little word written over every crucifix that you see written over this dark day ? Is not the word " why " the first to spring to our lips as we face the untold pain and shame of the Son of God, in whom the Father is well-pleased ? " Why doth my Lord weep ? Why is Thy apparel red, and Thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress ? " He looked about, and there was none to help : He sought, and there was none to give aid. And the servant is not above his Lord ; it is sufficient that he be as his Lord.

What, then, have you learnt to-day ? Has it not been a greater and warmer devotion to the ways of God ? How incomprehensible are His judgements

and how unsearchable His ways, for who hath known the mind of the Lord? His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways; for as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are His ways exalted above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. Yes, we are dealing with a God with whom "a thousand years are as one day," and one day as a thousand years: with a God who is high in His strength, and of whose greatness there is no end; with a God before whom the whole world is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth. "Oh, how desirable are all His works, and what we can know is but as a spark! Who among men is he who can know the counsels of God? or who can think what the will of God is? Peradventure thou wilt comprehend the steps of God, and will find out the Almighty perfectly? He is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou do? He is deeper than hell, and how wilt thou know? The

measure of Him is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

With such a God we have to deal, and are we surprised if His ways are not as ours? are we surprised if much around is shrouded in mystery? for God is "great in counsel, and incomprehensible in thought." Yet He is our Father and our Friend: He is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and are; we can trust Him; we must adore His ways.

On those ways a sweet light is ever shed by the story of Jesus of Nazareth, by the pains of Jesus on Calvary, by the love of Jesus in the Tabernacle. These are also the ways of God: and He has exercised you in them to-day. Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgement is right; just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages.

A day that has taught you something of the ways of God, and that in the teaching has deepened your trust and love for God, that has helped you to suppress all feelings of disloyalty to God, must have been

for you a day of gain, and a day too of most genuine, hearty praise from your life to your heavenly Father.

“God is His own interpreter, and He will make all plain.” “All His ways are mercy and truth.”

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take !  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace :  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour,  
The bud may have a bitter taste  
But sweet will be the flower.

End your day with sentiments of praise that shall be in harmony with the music of the day. “O Lord, O Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth ! Thy magnificence is elevated above the

heavens : great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord, God Almighty. I love Thee, O Lord my strength. Praise the Lord, O my soul : in my life I will praise the Lord, I will sing to my God as long as I shall be, for what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."

#### IV

### Your Mission

A DEFINITE task has been assigned to all of us by our Heavenly Father, and to each one has been given a measure of power and light to accomplish it. We have all "to bring forth fruit," for the gifts of God, whether few or many, whether great or small, are to be *used*, and not "folded in a napkin." Our Lord speaks of talents which have to be paid back *with interest*,



and His word does not return to Him idle. Some have five talents, some two, some only one ; but all have to work with what they have received, and "to whom much has been given, from him much shall be required."

Now these gifts and lights are to be used not only for our own good and salvation, but also for that of our neighbour. We are all "our brother's keeper"; we live with others and influence them ; we help or hinder them ; we are all members of one large family. To each one our Lord says : "Be ye fishers of men." It is not only priests who have to work thus for souls ; the laity are equally bound to labour in this cause, to fish in these deep and plentiful seas. "The harvest is great : but the labourers are few," because the sluggards are many. *You* have a mission to the world, though the world does not know you, for you are sick : *you* have an apostolate, a work for souls to do. Do not doubt or forget it, but let it be your

daily care, as one day it shall be your crown.

Recall to mind what you know of the value of a soul. "It is a pearl of great price," infinitely precious in the sight of God, to redeem which our Lord gladly gave all that He had. How glorious a work, then, is it to prevent even *one* mortal sin, to save even *one* soul! O blessed work! may my life produce both the one and the other!

And for which souls is it that you can 'fish'? What souls depend upon you, and look to you for help? Answer at once: "*All* souls." In every part of the world sinners are crying for help, and your prayers and pains for them are desired and needed; they will bring forth fruit and draw from the hand of God the graces that souls stand in need of. All have a claim on your prayers; to one and all you have a mission to fulfil.

But more: many look to you also for example, and by that means you have a mission to fulfil, quietly, unostenta-

tiously, but most truly. And charity begins at home, and so does your apostolate. Within the walls of your home there are perhaps some seven or eight gathered together, dear to you, dear to God, with immortal souls, to save any one of which our Lord would gladly die afresh. You see them every day, you are a part of their life ; you can help them in a hundred ways, and our Lord looks to you to do so, for there is your mission and work, and there shall be your fruit, your service of your King and Lord. It is a work, moreover, so suited to your powers ; you can exercise it, whether ill or well, by prayer, by sweetness and kindness, by the force of holy suggestions and loving promptings.

O my God, let me see the field of missionary work open to me in its vast extent and tremendous possibilities. Enlighten me, O Lord, to drink in the view, and let my heart rejoice at the things here said to me. I have a mission and a noble work to do ; my life shall

be fruitful in souls dear to the Sacred Heart. O blessed power of prayer, of good example, of a holy life ! Be ever mine, and let me wield you day by day for the good of the souls so dear to me, so precious in the eyes of my Lord and Master.

## V

### The Days of Communion

#### (i) THE EVE

ONE of these great days is now at hand, and our Lord is already preparing for His visit to you, even as you are for His approach. He is your Friend ; always treat Him as such, and remember that trust is the basis of all friendship. Now, trust in God is often a hard exercise for the soul, because it is with the Unseen, and no voice is heard to tell us that our cry has pierced the clouds. But "the just man lives by faith," and if we do not trust our Lord, we offend against justice and

against charity, for surely "He has borne our sorrows," and so has deserved our love, and love means trust.

Invite our Lord to your heart, and let your Communion with Him be one from which the sweet flower of trust shall grow, and hence a warmer and a more devoted service. Hold your crucifix before your eyes, and see the image of One who suffered and died for you, and who long ago thus united Himself to you. He then took possession of your soul, and has been so true ever since, never cold or unkind, never forgetful, harsh, or stern, but always a Friend. At every step of life He is with you, and with you He will be for eternity, if you are as true to Him as He is to you.

Your Communions tell you this ; they are a pledge of immortality, and a fore-taste of unmixed bliss and peace.

How full of peace and joy your heart must then be at the prospect of another Communion to-morrow ! Our Lord will come with joy to feed you, and to assure

you that all is well. He will say to you : " My child, trust Me to the end." And you will say to Him : " My Lord and God, best of Friends, kindest of Benefactors, bless me, and accept my heart that is sorry for any infidelity to grace, that is grateful for all Thy kindness, that longs and purposes to love Thee and Thee alone to the end."

On the first Easter Day, " Jesus met His disciples, saying : All hail ! But they came up and took hold of His feet and adored Him " (Matt. xxviii. 9). This most tender scene will be renewed in your room to-morrow. " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh to thee." He will meet you at your bedside, and say : " All hail ! be of good heart ; I am Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; I am come to heal you, to refresh you, to draw you to Myself." There is so much contained in those two words : " All hail !" They speak of love and friendship, of joy at meeting, of readiness to do a service. And you will " take

hold of our Lord's feet and adore Him." With Mary Magdalen, at the feet of our Lord is our post, for His feet speak of His hard work for us, of His pain on our behalf; and when we kneel there in humility and in sorrow for the sins of the world, we acknowledge Him to be Master and Friend, and love and reparation begin to grow. My heart, O Lord, is ready: come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

(ii) AT MID-DAY

How dear your room must be to you, for the Divine Presence has been there to-day! It is indeed a sanctuary, and the Presence of our Lord seems to fill its every corner, to remind you, when you are alone, that in very truth He never leaves you or forgets you, for in Him you live and move and are! The Blessed Sacrament gratifies our Lord's wish to keep ever close to His sheep, and to be all in all to them. You in turn will always try to be near to Him, to see Him in everything, to accept all as coming



through His hands and with His knowledge, rich with a power of giving Him glory, if only it be well and loyally used. This principle alone makes lives noble, pure, and fruitful, though often it be hard to act upon.

Your faith shows you in very truth that God “has chosen the little things to confound the strong”—things that are within the power and reach of all, even of the poor, even of the sick. And on a Communion day your courage and love are renewed to live up to this principle, and to embody it in your daily life.

### (iii) TOWARDS EVENING

What a glorious day you have had ! In the early morning a visit from your King and Friend, who blest you, and rejoiced to go to you and say : “All hail ! peace be to you ; it is I, fear not.” What sweet moments those were ! What light they throw on a long and difficult period of life now passed by, never to come again ! Your Communion has sealed that

part and labelled it for heaven, safe for eternity, and has opened the future just enough to show you that still you have a work to do for God, and to tell you that in that work you shall never be alone, but Jesus always near to you, true to you now as He has ever been. "Your spirit rejoiced in God your Saviour," for you knew yourself to be strong enough to walk in God's law, to have a place in God's mind, to count in God's grand scheme of creation, to be wanted by God for a definite work.

How many hearts are sad and broken to-night because they cannot count a single friend among creatures, and are so weighed down by sin that they cannot count God as their friend either? Not so with you. Your ten fingers cannot count the hearts on earth and in heaven that beat with love for you to-night.

"Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid; all hail, My child!" were our Lord's words to you this morning, and His visit has flooded your soul with

peace throughout the day. And in return you gave our Lord your heart, your life, your will. You gave Him all He wanted, and He is content.

You are friends with Him, friends with all friends, with no bitterness in your heart against any one, with a real desire to do your best for God, and to work for Him to your latest breath ! Close, then, your eyes to-night, feeling that on this day much has come to help and encourage you, and wake to-morrow resolved to work afresh in the vineyard of the Lord. The whole of your life was wafted to heaven this morning by the power of the Adorable Sacrifice and by the sweet might of your Communion. There let it rest in the arms of your Father who seeth in secret.

## VI

### Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit

LET us try to bring before our minds the scene on Calvary at the close of the three

hours. A great change has come about since the first word from the Cross was spoken. The darkness has frightened many away, and they have gone home striking their breasts, and feeling that an awful crime has been committed, and that "this Man hath done no evil." A few remain because they are bound to do so, but our Lord is practically alone at the last, surrounded by a little flock of friends.

The most awful consequence of sin, namely death, has yet to be sweetened and ennobled, as the other pains of men have already been in the hours of the Sacred Passion. It is time that the Eternal Father should give His beloved Son sleep; and crying with a loud voice, "'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

"The sting of death is sin," but there is no sin here, and that death is not only precious in the sight of God, but full of peace. It is all one with the life now closed. "His meat has been to do the

will of Him who sent Him," and for that end alone has every word been spoken, every labour fulfilled, every sacrifice welcomed, every pain endured.

It is appointed unto each one of us to die, and let us be wise, and understand, and provide for that last end. Let us pray to God before it is dark, before that our feet stumble on the dark mountains, to make us know our end and what is wanting to us, for short years are passing away, and we are walking in a path by which we shall not return.

Our deaths will be as our lives. If we have lived for God, we shall have hope and peace in the hour of death ; but the death of the wicked is full of remorse and of awful foreboding of the judgement, as he finds himself fallen into the hands of the living God. In a word, to die is gain, if to live has been Christ.

On the anniversary of the death of a friend we visit his grave and recall all we know about him, and the memories thus refreshed are often both bitter and

sweet. Had we ever been unkind to him—oh, how glad we should feel not to have been so ! Had we ever done him a kindness—how glad we feel that so it was ! And what did he do for us ? We remember it all, and speak of it, and then we think, How did he die ? May our end be the same ! And every memory becomes a link of love that binds us afresh to our friend afar off, and raises our hearts above the level of the world.

So let it be with our Lord. Recall all He has done for you, and regret all you have done against Him up till now ; and then think : How did He die ? He died with our Lady by His side, with St. John, His beloved disciple, standing near, with St. Mary Magdalen at His feet ; and He died on His Cross, and I want to die like that.

At the last, may the Sacraments of Holy Church be given me, that with my God I be at peace, and can say : “ Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” And I know our Lady, my Mother, will be at

my side, that I may die a true child of Mary. And near to me I want another St. John—yes, at least one friend, one whose life I have tried to make bright, one to whom I have tried to be kind, and who will pray for me when I am no more. And near to me I also want another St. Mary Magdalen—yes, at least one sinner whom I shall have helped by my prayers and pains, or by my example, or in some other way, to draw nearer to God, and who will plead for me when I stand to give an account of my stewardship. And I would like to die like my Saviour, on my cross, true to my work in life to the last, and with arms extended—that is, loving all, and forgiving all, at peace with all, and stripped too of everything, with no love for the world, and having used aright whatever goods I had.

Such a death is possible to all, but it is the outcome and crown of a life spent for God and eternity, in which every day with its labour has been consigned into the hands of God, so that when the end



comes and the dawn of eternity shines upon our eyes as they are closed to sights of earth, that end is all of a piece with the life before it, all for God, and we breathe back our spirit with calm and peace into the hands whence it came.

“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul.”

My Jesus, three hours didst Thou hang in agony upon the Cross, and then didst die for me. Let me die before I sin again, and if I live, may I live to love Thee and to serve Thee faithfully.

Let for me to live be Christ, that to die may be gain ; so will it be if I know and love no one but “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

## VII

### The Love of God

THOUGH Almighty God is a hidden God, and dwelleth in light inaccessible, and though no man hath seen God at any

time, nevertheless He has not left Himself without witness, and His revelation of Himself, of His mind and purpose, is most full and glorious, inexhaustible and convincing, and from first to last it speaks to us of His love for men. It proclaims to us that there is indeed between God and His creatures a very real tie, a close bond, a relationship born of love and fed by love ; it assures us that God values men, and desires that not one of His little ones should perish. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and we are as the apple of His eyes.

Let us refresh our sense of God's love for us, and deepen our conviction of this fundamental fact, viewing it in the light of the text : " A threefold cord is not easily broken." First there is the fact that God created and fashioned us. He sent us into this world, in a definite place, at a definite time, amid definite surroundings, endowed with certain talents, and into us He breathed an immortal soul. This is God's first act of love—it is the

love of a Father, the first cord of the three. It speaks to us of a thoughtful provision for our good both here and hereafter. It makes Him look upon us as children, with a birthright, with a claim on a home, with a claim on protection and on the supply of all that may be necessary in our own special sphere for the accomplishment of our Father's design in creating us at all.

Next there is the fact that God redeemed us and purchased us for Himself afresh. He so loved the world as to give to us His only Son, who should renew the old cord of love, and add a fresh one to be entwined with it. Sin was abounding, and alienating men not only from the service of God, but even from all knowledge of Him ; but grace was to abound instead, and love of an even more tender kind was to swell the might of the old link that had existed from eternity. Yes, this second love of God for men is as the love of a mother, who loves most tenderly and enduringly the child of her sorrows.

“Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend.”

And now, in virtue of the Passion of our Lord, a new name has been added to us ; no longer are we mere creatures or even sons, but heirs, and as such, a grander prospect is laid open to us and larger responsibilities rest upon us. Here, then, is the third cord in the bond that draws God to us in love ! All we need to work out our salvation, for we have our own part to play in the all-important task, must be provided. Of ourselves we have nothing and can do nothing ; our riches and sufficiency are from above, and thence every best and perfect gift shall descend, and daily does descend, to draw us to God, to enrich our crown for eternity, to enable us to go about doing good and walking as children of the light. This is our sanctification, our Lord upholding us, encouraging us, easing our load, explaining our difficulties, sharing our joys and sorrows, pardoning our falls, feeding our weakness, and

giving us foretastes of future peace and glory.

This is the third cord. It is not the love of a father or of a mother—it is the love of a Brother, of a Friend. And this three-fold cord is not easily broken ! On God's part it is never broken, but He would make it bind us as prisoners of the Lord, more and more closely, day by day.

But though not easily broken, it can be broken, and how ? The love of God as a Father is broken by want of gratitude. How little do we realize our vast grounds for a boundless gratitude to God ! When all goes smoothly, we are ready to say : Bless the Lord, O my soul !, but when touched no matter how slightly by the scourge of trial, all that God has done in creating us, in endowing us, in making us destined for eternity, is forgotten, and we grow sullen and impatient, and the first cord of love is picked to pieces, and binds no more.

And what is it that unpicks the second cord of love ? It is a want of trust. Cer-

tainly the whole service of our Incarnate Lord seems summed up in trust, and coloured by it. For it is a service that makes *demands* upon us ; yes, it calls for obedience to a yoke, for a fight with a foe against heavy odds, for a life of self-denial and inner martyrdom ; yes, *but He has told us so, just to win our trust* ; and can it be, that one who has loved us so as to die for us should ever fail us, or forget us, or press us too hard ? Yet how many, when He “ makes as though He would go further,” draw back, and walk with Him no more, and loosen the second cord by want of trust !

Lastly, the third bond of love, the love of Brother and Friend, the love of One who shares our every joy and trial, and is with us all days to infuse into us every needful grace, is weakened by want of zeal, by worldliness, which ties the hands of our Lord, and makes us dispute with Him about all He asks of us, and bids us content ourselves with views and standards which, though perchance

they are not wrong in themselves, are *on a lower level* than those that find favour with a Master who never knew half-measures, but gave His very life for His sheep. If God has so loved us, we ought also to love Him, and we ought also to love one another. And love means service, a service and obedience full of joy and zeal.

Let us often rehearse for ourselves in prayer and meditation this full and loving relation in which God stands to us and we to God. It should be the basis for action, and for a happiness, full of peace. Let us gladly be bound by this threefold cord that is not easily broken, until it binds us in eternity, where it cannot be broken at all.

## VIII

### Time and Eternity

It is the glory of our Lord's teaching and work on earth to have united heaven



with the earth, time with eternity. There is shed on all the difficulties of this vale of tears a light from on high that explains their meaning and soothes, if it does not wholly take away, their sting. This life is made one with the next, and by this union has acquired its meaning and its value. Why are we tempted? why do we suffer? why must we deny ourselves? why must our service be life-long and not merely intermittent? This world can never answer those questions, but eternity makes a clear reply, and what it says we know full well, and ought to be content.

We know in part now; but behind the veil, we shall know even as we are known, and in the ages of eternity shall recount what things were done in the way, and how we knew our Lord in the breaking of bread. That lovely verse of St. Luke's Gospel, which recounts the feelings of the disciples who, on the first Easter day, met our Lord in disguise on the road to Emmaus, sums up a part at

least of the joyous occupation of eternity. How changed will then be our view of what we have endured ! how gloriously true and straight will then the ways of God appear ! how we shall then rejoice if at all we have been found worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus ! how grand will then appear the truth that if we would reign with our Lord, we must also suffer with Him !

Yes, it is useful and encouraging from time to time thus to take our stand at the gate of death, or on the shore of eternity, and to say to ourselves : "What shall I wish to have done then ? what shall I then think of these trials and demands upon my patience ? what fruit shall I then have in the things of which I am now ashamed ? Their end is death ; let me then seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added to me." This is a practice that aids at all times, but there come times to all of special difficulty—times of dryness and full of a temptation not to bestir ourselves, but

rather to sit still until the storm be past—times when we would almost be glad if the relations between God and ourselves were held in suspense awhile, and we might be free from the yoke of obedience to law. Is there one that has not failed somewhat beneath its strain? Is there one who would not welcome some comfort at such an hour? Is there a remedy and a relief?

Yes, be still at such times, and tell to your soul what things have been done in the way! Bless the Lord, and see thou never forget what He hath done for thee. Recall your past history, and let your experience aid and strengthen you. How good God has been!—so longsuffering, so generous and kind. When have you wanted for anything? when has His eye ceased to rest upon you, or His arm been slow to uphold you? and when have you yourself been happy and most at peace? Are you, then, going to stop now, and waste time, and refuse to work, and be unwilling to do

a holy violence to yourself? Think of what things have been done in the way, and shall be done again, and think further of how you have known our Lord in the breaking of bread. Yes, nothing shall sustain you in a dark hour, nothing shall prompt you to action more truly, than the candid calling to mind of what our Lord has done for you in moments of sweetest Communion. That He has come at all is wonderful; that He has come so often is more wonderful still; and can One who day by day will give such proof of His love and interest, of His desire to work with us, be anything but one deserving of trust and obedience? Shall His sweet summons be disobeyed?

Wherefore, when tempted to sloth or to lose heart at work, and in the hour of pain, when tempted to look back having put your hand to the plough, when tempted to walk no more with our Lord for a time at any rate, let the light of Eternity illumine the dreary things and road of Time, and think a moment of

what things have been done in the way, and of how you have known our Lord in the breaking of bread, and then expect the Lord, do manfully, and go on your way rejoicing, having at least tasted and seen that the Lord is sweet.

## IX

### The Agony in the Garden

IN considering the Sacred Passion of our Lord, we must always remember that not only was it the desire of His Sacred Heart at the last, as being the means ordained for paying our ransom and for drawing all men to Himself, but that it had ever been present to His mind and accepted by Him as a part, the chief part, of His work on earth, in obedience to the will of Him who sent Him. It was no new plan devised in the closing months of His earthly sojourn ; no, it was as plain to Him in the years at Nazareth as on the night wherein He was betrayed. It

was the chalice He had to drink, the baptism wherewith He must needs be baptized, the obedience He had undertaken to render. This it is very much to the purpose to insist upon, if we would understand aright the Agony in the Garden.

The Last Supper is over, and the greatest gift of God to men has been bestowed ; the apostolic company is now reduced by one, for Judas has gone forth to his work ; a hymn is sung, and in the gloom of the evening our Lord and His eleven go forth to the Garden, whither He had so often resorted.

And at once a great change comes over Him. Yes, the speed and greatness of the change are much to be noted. At the Supper He had spoken at great length, in a tone of joy and love unspeakable, words of comfort, nay, words of victory. Nowhere else in the Gospel is an address by our Lord to be found at all to compare for length and beauty with the three wonderful chapters recorded by

St. John as having been spoken at the last Supper. But now, quite suddenly, His face is changed, His look grows sad, and He can hardly speak at all. The few words spoken are broken and disjointed, and clearly uttered with great difficulty. A moment ago, He had been the comfort and stay of His chosen ones : now He looks to them to support Him. "He began to be sorrowful and to be sad ; He began to fear and to be heavy" ! "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," He says : "Stay with Me, and watch with Me." Are these words that fall from lips which but a few moments ago said : "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid : believe in Me : have confidence : I have overcome the world, and go to prepare a place for you in My Father's house" ?

The Apostles had never before seen their Master like this ; they had seen Him weary, they had seen Him shed tears ; but now He is full of fear and heaviness. It is a pain to walk, a pain to



speak: something is at work to bring about a change so great and startling. And notice that at this stage the agony has hardly begun. Later on there shall come over our Lord that awful new feeling, never felt before, of being a man of sin, deeply encrusted with the loathsome stains of all men's deeds of darkness, that awful, unutterable woe of being under the ban of the Father's displeasure, as the vision of the sins of the world passed before His eyes, and crushed Him to the ground, causing the blood to flow copiously.

But this has not begun; yet already our Lord is sad and heavy, and the words fall from His lips: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay here and watch with Me: I go yonder to pray." And falling on the ground, He prays the simple petition: "My Father, if it be possible, let this hour pass from Me: Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee: take this chalice from Me: yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

It is the *fear* of our Lord that here must arrest our attention. He is confronted with a work for which, now that the hour is come, He feels Himself unequal, so awful was the prospect, and so clear was it to His sacred mind. He measured the anguish—His own and that of His blessed Mother, who alone would suffer with Him. Great as the sea is the only figure that can at all describe it; and a fear came upon Him, more especially as with the awful prospect there was coupled the sense of failure as the result. The human nature of our Lord is to the front, and how to escape, if escape be possible, is His thought in this hour.

And escape *was* possible. We must remember that so great was the dignity of His human nature, hypostatically united to the Godhead, that had He prayed absolutely for the chalice to pass, it would have passed, for the absolute prayer of Christ as man was always efficacious, and could not be denied.

And so had He prayed, " My Father, this chalice must pass : men must be redeemed in some other way," it would have been so. But our Lord prayed conditionally : " If it be possible, let it pass, but not My will but Thine be done." And it was not the Father's will ; but with repeated prayer there came the dawn of power to drink the bitter draught, and never to look back till on the Cross He could say : " It is finished ; Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

What, then, have we learnt here about our Lord? Surely this, that great as was His desire to suffer for us, and clear as had been the prospect of the Passion for long, still, when the hour actually came, His human nature recoiled. " I cannot go on," He seemed to cry : " it is too much. My Father, surely I have done enough ; My hands have laboured the thing which is good, My lips have spoken Thy praise, My whole life is an example ; and as to pain, I have laboured from My youth, and have not had where to

lay My head. O Father ! let all this suffice, and spare Me this punishment, or accept a less severe penalty " ; but He added : " Not My will but Thine be done." And in prayer His strength revived, and to the dregs the chalice of pain was drunk.

Our lesson here is one that goes to the very roots of our service to God. Our days of pilgrimage are likened to a road in which we have to walk, and on which we have a certain work to do. The road is narrow and steep, and there are pitfalls and precipices on either side. The heat of the day is often great, and the burden laid upon us is apt to seem greater than we can bear. Who has not felt this ? We started out and perchance took our early steps full of courage and joy, certain of victory, though we were forewarned of the nature of the road and of the severity of our task. Still we would begin ; but then our agony begins too, and we grow heavy and sad ; there is no fruit to be seen, and the task becomes no lighter,

and the steepness of the road is not any less ; we are afraid we are unequal to the vocation, and that we shall never persevere ; and we say : " My Father, this chalice must pass from me."

A languor steals upon us, we are dispirited, and our efforts have no heart ; prayer is soon cast aside ; a temptation with which we have perhaps wrestled well and successfully for years, is allowed to beat us back ; a work we have carried on with difficulty and self-denial for long is abandoned ; our last state threatens to become worse than the first.

Yes, we are all very prone to be visited by trouble such as this, and in the hour of such visitation may the example of Jesus in His Agony be our stay and guide. Pray the longer, and in conformity to God's will ; face and drink the chalice to the end ; strength will come and victory too, though you may never see fruit to your pain.

All work for God and for eternity, all work for souls, must be done beneath the

shadows of Mount Olivet and in the spirit our Lord showed in His Agony there. It will be carried out for the most part alone, and often without sympathy or encouragement, but it will be blest by God and lead us to Him. "May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last."

## X

### **The Fatherhood of God the Life of Prayer**

THE duty of prayer is at once the easiest and most necessary of all our spiritual duties. By prayer we approach God at all times ; it is the life and success of all our work, while the Sacraments, strong and powerful as they are, depend, in great measure, on prayer for their effi-

cacy. God loves prayer, and invites us to pray to Him at all times ; His ears are ever attentive to the voice of our supplication, His hands ever ready to receive the offering of our daily tasks when done in His name and offered to Him by the homage of humble prayer. And yet prayer is much neglected, and often appears to be both dry and difficult. Of course, like all work for God, prayer is sure to be dry and difficult at times. Prayer is an *exercise*, a raising and movement of the heart and mind ; it is not meant to be as easy as to breathe, neither is it meant to be difficult in any great degree. Little children can pray, the sick and the suffering can pray, even the dying can pray, when they can do nothing else. Indeed, we cannot too deeply realize the facility of prayer, and that therefore those who do not pray are much to blame and without excuse.

Now to pray is to converse with God. Make that definition your own, and take no other. Other definitions more com-



plicated may be given and are given, but be simple, and say that to pray is to converse with God, and at once we see how intimate it becomes, and what variety is introduced into the very idea of prayer. Think of what a conversation with a true friend is. Think first of what it is not. With friends we do not talk on indifferent subjects, we do not discuss the weather, or talk for the sake of talking. No, none of this ; but at once we plunge into what is nearest and dearest to us, into common interests ; we unfold plans, and make requests, and ask for information and guidance ; we speak too of difficulties, yet always in simple, unstudied words, always to the point, always in a spirit of trust and gladness, without strain, anxious only to make fullest use of every moment, grieved only when we must part. Such should be our prayer to God.

And what is the basis and secret of the intensity of any such conversation ? It is the relation in which the two parties stand to one another. Apply

this to prayer. Why, for example, is it easier to pray to a saint whom we know, than to one of whose life we know little or nothing? When we pray to our Lady, what is it that makes prayer so sweet and intimate? Is it that being Queen of Heaven, of angels, and of saints, she can help us powerfully? No; it is that she is our Mother. All her intimacy with our Lord was in her capacity as His Mother, and so it is with us. It is the relation she bears to us, and that we bear to her, which facilitates and deepens our prayers to her. And when we pray to God, what is going to help us? Is it that He is our Creator, our Lord and Judge, our Alpha and Omega? Nay, these are points that crush us to the ground, and make us feel our nothingness, and bid us call on angels and saints and even inanimate creation to praise Him, because we cannot do so aright. Our relation to God as His creature is too severe and tremendous to help us much in our prayer. Therefore, our Lord says :

“Thus shalt thou pray : Our Father” !  
Yes, our Father ! Our Father ! It is the  
Fatherhood of God that forms the main-  
stay and vivifying principle of prayer.

Indeed, we cannot make too much of the  
fact that when we pray it is to a Father,  
who listens with a father's love and  
interest, who gives with a father's wisdom,  
who refuses and takes away with a father's  
forethought and care for the welfare of  
his child. There is here nothing to  
frighten us, or to make us awed and  
dumb : rather everything to draw us on,  
to make us “natural,” at home and at  
our ease, everything to call forth our  
thought, to direct our attention, and to  
make it easy to make known our peti-  
tions.

Surely this thought was in the mind of  
our Lord when He taught His disciples  
how to pray. Begin, He seemed to say,  
as children speaking to their father ;  
“thus shall ye pray : Our Father,” that  
the Fatherhood of God be the life-giving  
principle to every prayer. Thus did our

Lord Himself pray when, being in an agony, He prayed the longer: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." Thus did He pray when He asked a boon for His enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus did He pray when near to death: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Let us go and do in like manner.

## XI

## Thoughts in Captivity

BAD thoughts are a trouble to which every one is subject. Some have more than others, some have them at times only, others seem never free from them. And they have a tendency to discourage us, and probably there is no temptation from which we would so much wish to be wholly free. Strictly speaking, they merely rank on the same level with every other kind of spiritual trouble,

but by their very nature they fasten their tooth very firmly, and it seems the more difficult to throw them off. They seek to sully every virtue, but the virtue of purity most of all. This arises from the weakness of our nature, and because the devil as a rule is more persistent in his efforts against the loveliest of virtues than any other. Yet we know that "no price is worthy of a continent soul, and that he that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his friend." And so we would guard it with jealous care, refraining ourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul, for blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

It is the wish of your heart to sanctify your life, to obey and love God, to hate what is wrong, to pursue what is right, and always to keep on the safe side, and when you are troubled by these thoughts, you are apt to become frightened lest you depart from the path you have chosen. All the more is

this the case because, being weak and often in pain, you cannot protect yourself as easily as others who are strong, for you are unable to busy yourself in active work, and so to distract your mind. Thus you are thrown the more on yourself, and you feel defenceless, and so are troubled.

But let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid : God is there as well as the devil. God sees all your circumstances, and knows the pressure of the thought, and how much you can stand, and how much He wants you to stand. He never leaves you, and is pleased to see you fight. He knows the direction of your will all through, and bids you fight calmly. Take aim ; look where you hit ; do not beat the air ; call the devil a liar, and say strongly to him : " Begone, Satan ! " The thought may continue after this, and may even last for hours ; never mind. Your initial act showed the devil the door, and the garden of your soul was shut against him. He may, and probably will, go on whining outside like a whipped

hound ; but quietly disregard him, and rest in the thought that you rose to the occasion instantly, and now are resting in the thought of the nearness of God.

If you are too frightened, you are sure to be discouraged. The devil is a bully, and bullies go on bullying only when they see that they give pain. If you quietly disregard him, he will the sooner cease from bullying you.

Every morning say one special Hail Mary to our Lady to beg her that day to guard you especially in this matter. Remember it is the special virtue of all children of Mary. Refresh your horror of aught that can stain it by quiet meditation on the scourging at the pillar, one of our Lord's most awful pains. Also let your confessions help you, by disclosing the dangers to which the devil subjects you, for he dislikes his tactics being laid bare. Aim high, for we are to be as angels. " Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is

known both with God and with men ; it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." Thus may every thought be brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. x. 5).

## XII

### Dark Days

WHY is it that any days are hard and dark, for surely they form no part of God's plan for His creatures? No, they are our own make, a family trouble, and all have their share of them, for they all date and spring from the first mortal sin. Most skilfully and lovingly has our Lord shown us how to face them and turn them to profit, yet they remain our own work. On a dark day "the ropes of sin" bind us tightly, we feel our slavery and bondage more, and sigh more deeply for the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

"The ropes of sin"!—a strong and beautiful image from the Psalms, which



very accurately describes what we feel on dark days. They are very tight, and irksome, and painful then, and Nature bids us resist and fight them, but Grace bids us be a "prisoner in the Lord," so that the second half of the Psalmist's verse may also be true of us :—

"The ropes of sin have drawn me tightly,  
But I have not forgotten Thy law, O Lord."

Blessed, then, be any day that turns captivity captive, and makes us more truly prisoners of the Lord.

A dark day is a teacher that throws light on some of the mysteries by which we are surrounded. It lifts a veil and lights up the problem of pain. Our Redemption was accomplished by pain, and men are bidden suffer with our Lord, for the same cause and in the same beautiful spirit, that they may become like to Him, and "may fill up those things that are wanting in His Passion."

This in itself is wonderful, but when we stop to think of the amount of pain this

world has seen, we are struck dumb. Is there no explanation? Why does God want so much? We do not really know, but let us look at the mystery with the eyes of a loving faith that may suggest an answer. Why did God become man? why are gifts so stupendous as the Blessed Sacrament given to us? why is a place in heaven for eternity prepared for creatures so unworthy? Ah! here it is: God is God, and all concerning Him is on a large scale. Our souls are all-precious to God, and are made to be with Him for ever, and this is true of millions upon millions. Therefore there must be an abundance of the antidote to that which can ruin all, an abundance of seasoning salt, and that salt is pain, that salt is the Cross. And to that abundance we may add a goodly handful by a dark day well spent for God. By so doing, the salt that destroys the weeds of sin and preserves virtue, will be made to act, and, as God looks down at the close of such a day from the starry heavens on this vale of tears, it will bear a purer and

a nobler aspect because of your pain to-day and of the use you will make of it.

Some measure of dark days must come to us all in this life. They come for our good, to stir us to the very depths, lest we forget that we are pilgrims of the night, on the road together to a land of promise which flows with milk and honey, and the light of which is the brightness of the Face of God. They are not lost or squandered, they are not empty days. They bring us to our knees in humble prayer before the Tabernacle or at the foot of the Crucifix. They draw us more closely, though sometimes almost violently, to our Lord, as though He really must have us, and make us pray and look to Him. Through the bath of scalding oil He drew St. John, His beloved disciple, unscathed ; so too will He draw us, purified and enriched, through many a dark and scalding hour, for we too are among the disciples whom Jesus loves.

And if to-day shall be one of great difficulty, surely it will also be one of

victory. It must be so. Some height will be scaled, some puzzle of how to conquer self will be solved. This is the whole work of life, the whole preparation for the vision of God, the whole sanctification of a soul ; but it means care, and thought, and time. Try, then, to bear all with patience and conformity to God's holy will, and to gain merit to-day not only for yourself, but for those dear to you.

Imagine, morning by morning, as you say your first prayers, that our Lord meets you face to face, and that you say to Him : " What is my portion for to-day, Lord ? " And if He answers : " Can you drink to-day of the chalice which I drank of ? " you will reply : " I can ; I will ; Thy will be done." Yes, just for to-day ! There is much encouragement and wisdom in that little phrase. Do not look too far ahead, but just sufficient for the day !

Often on a dark day let your mind and heart rest in the thought of heaven. Scripture has revealed it so fully to us, because

we need its sweet prospect in this vale of tears. All pain and sorrow have an end ; hard and distasteful though they be, they have a deep meaning and great value. Day by day the amount to be faced and endured gets less and less, while, to those who live near to God, with humble conformity to His will, the brightness of heaven grows daily and solidly greater. God is always far more generous than we can ever be. If we give Him all now, what will He give us both now and hereafter ? First Peace, then Glory. Therefore, as St. James says, "count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations." Were ever words penned more outrageous, more utterly at variance with the wisdom of men ? Trials of all sorts shall beset us, and yet what are we to think of them ? "All Joy" ! This is the wisdom of the saints, learnt step by step in the school of Jesus crucified.

And now, with this light to cheer you, go forward in spirit to the last hour of a dark day well spent for God. The end

has come, "the former things are passed away," and how glad will you be if you did your duty in the early morning, and made a virtue of necessity ! Where is the sacrifice now ? Already in heaven with God, changed into golden merit, and more than likely it has ere now borne fruit in some poor soul that needed grace, and will bear yet more. You are the richer and the happier for the sacrifice of the morning. You have "resisted the devil, strong in faith."

And now, as the curtain of night is drawn around you, your soul is full of a beautiful calm, and, alone with God, your crucifix in your hand, with tears ready to flow, both in trust and gratitude for the help of to-day, for our Lord has been near you all the time, and you have never forgotten Him, think for a moment of all the hearts that love you and feel for you. There are many, and you know them all. There is first the Sacred Heart of Jesus, your Friend, which loves you to-night so warmly ; then the hearts of all who are

dear to you, the hearts of many friends in many parts, which feel for you and whose interest prompts them to do much for you. And why especially do these love you and feel for you? It is because you have tried to wrestle with difficulties and pains, not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil by good. This especially endears you to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, which once looked for one to comfort, and found none.

To the natural eye this day seems a blank, because there is nothing to show. But God is a hidden God, whose eyes pierce the surface, and to-night He sees good effort in your life of to-day, solid work for Him, many a brick made with little straw! And He will sign the day with His sweet and adorable Name, written in the Blood of His only Son. Its history deserves the name of Saviour to be stamped upon it, for it has saved you from many a fall, and has helped others by winning graces for them. It has the shadow of the Cross, which is

the blessing of Jesus Christ, resting on it from first to last.

Wherefore rejoice in the Lord, as He comes to give you His blessing at the end of this hard day. See His uplifted hand and His eyes so bright and pleased. All is well. Kiss that hand with gratitude, because a good day's work is over, and our Lord has written it down to your credit in the Book of Life. Treasure in heaven! What a consoling thought! Speak to our Lord quite openly, and do not hide your pain; do not make light of what presses on your heart, but remember He loves you and is ready to help you.

Say to Him those lovely words: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." You cannot say them too often. "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." And our Lord replies: "My child, I know it well, for I am very near you now; but your sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Is this enough for you? Your sickness and the glory of God! are these two entwined together? Yes, so it



is. In peace, then, in the self-same, I will sleep and rest. I know that my Redeemer liveth, who having loved His own that were in the world, loves them to the end !

### XIII

#### The Work of the Sick for God

NEVER think your life to be of no avail because you are ill, for it can be full of fruit for your eternity, and full of work for our Lord's interests, quite as full as that of any other living creature. With the return of strength, you may have more to show at the end of the day, but you will not have done more in reality. Remember that we all work with our Lord, hand in hand with Him, and it is He, not we, that produces the effect. He works through us, and we must be simply as instruments in His hands, and therein lies our merit, even as it is the source of our peace.

Now it is precisely this being an instrument, and not the worker, that is so trying to our natural pride, for it means the conformity of our will to a higher will, and this is the greatest sacrifice we can make, the grandest homage to our Creator we can offer. And when the instrument sees no results, it is apt to grow restless; but here our sense of trust in our Lord must come to our aid, and keep us calm at His feet, and make us say: "I know in whom I have believed: I know the Heart in which I have placed my all."

This is among the great lessons we have all to learn, and it lies at the root of, and explains the merit of, the apostleship of pain which the sick are called upon to exercise. How hard you can work for the Master, simply because you are ill, and with what glorious, though hidden, success! Yes, glorious, because hidden! Faith! Faith! till faith be past, and hope be past, and only love remain. It is like passing through mountain scenery,

with torrents rushing down the mountain-side into the river below, that flows on lashed by the rocks into foam. Such is the course of human pain and tears ; on they flow in a chequered course, dashed by rocks and checked by difficulties of all sorts ; yet we know that lakes are near, and into those lakes the waters at the last will flow, and there they rest, and reflect the eternal hills around.

Never think much of the reward for anything you do for our Lord, but rather be filled with a sense of all He has done for you, and in this you have sufficient motive for serving Him with a full and glad heart. Our Lord has been your best friend, and already has done far more than enough to deserve your undivided service. He does not change, and His years do not grow old ; He never wearies of His beloved sheep. One day you will see Him face to face, and meanwhile you will work for Him, in whatever way and by whatever means He wishes, so that in your work there shall be no self-seeking,

but all shall be done solely out of love for a Lord who has been very good to you.

Thank God for every suffering He sends. Thank Him, though you hardly dare question whether your thanks be truly sincere. Thank Him most of all when the temptation to repine is strongest ; thank Him when you seem on the point of losing hope. Thank Him at the beginning, when the suffering is foreseen ; thank Him when it comes, thank Him when it stays, thank Him when it passes away, not because it has gone, but because it came, and blessed you and sanctified you, and drew you nearer to your Lord who was crucified for you.

Perchance the career of some one is entrusted to you by our Lord, and is to be made glorious by your pain. Love the task, for you are equal to it. And when you think of the value of one soul—that our Lord would have become man and suffered for even one soul—you come to realize that your hands are indeed full, that your life has a purpose, for one of the

interests of Jesus rests with you. Perhaps you have more than one ; but even if it be but one, rejoice and be content, for there is fruit in your work. And one day, behind the veil, or perchance before, that soul will say to you : " I owe you so much, for to you under God, and to your pains endured for me, I owe all. My welfare was the burden of your prayers and the thought of your mind and heart." Try, then, to turn all to good for the cause of the Good Shepherd. Think of those "other sheep" that "are not of the fold," that are far from God, hurrying into eternity with empty hands, and do a good stroke of business for these. A day cannot but be full of gain, on which even one definite act has been done for the great cause.

And at night, these words will give forth their sweet melody within you : " I know Mine and Mine know Me." They will be to you as a look from the eyes of our Lord, to say that all is well. It is not for us to know exactly what we are

doing for God : enough that we know we are in His hand, using the material He has sent, and as He wishes it to be used, leaving results to Him. The forces that transform the world and save souls, are not bustle and organized "work," as men think. They are the forces of Nazareth, they are pain, prayer, obedience, simplicity. Our Lord took thirty years to teach and practise them ; shall we learn their value and splendour in thirty months ?

Hold fast to the lights and lessons you are learning through sickness, and never fear but that our Lord gathers His fruit from your hours of pain and weariness. Not one twinge of pain is lost, for all things work together for good, especially victories over self when gained for the love of Jesus crucified. Beware both of excitement and of discouragement ; fight coolly ; aim with deliberation, and all will be well. When Mother Kerr was asked if she could face another temptation, she said : " Oh yes, I would like to give the devil just one more kick." You can do the same.

To live at all is a great privilege ; to live for God is our glory, to live with God will be our reward. There will be no greater joy in eternity than the quiet surprise that a life, apparently so monotonous and uneventful, so full of difficulty, should issue in a glorious existence amid angels and saints around the throne of God. Try, then, to love God intensely, "more than these"; thank Him for creating you, for showing you so many marks of love, marks that can only be seen, like gold in the earth, by the light of the Cross and of Faith. Never let it be thought that you have no work to do, no purpose in life ; and if we see even a little result ourselves, as we sometimes do, how much more must there be which is hidden wisely from our eyes, but for which we trust God, who will reveal all when the day breaks and the shadows retire.

## XIV

## Our Temptations

NEVER forget that all temptation comes to you by God's permission, to humble you, to help you to realize your nearness to sin, and to make you lean more and more on Him, and on those things which lead you to Him, such as prayer and the sacraments. Your soul must be beautified and enriched by the fire of some temptation : your will must have some enemy to wrestle with, otherwise how can it be exercised for God's cause, how can it be the will of a soldier? Of course we always think we could resist any and every temptation rather than the one we actually have to encounter ; but our Lord knows best. If you take your trial away, your life would not give God one half the glory it now does ; and if our Lord did take away your present cross, He would certainly give you another. That is His way with the souls He loves.



Morning by morning, as you open your eyes to the light, you should kneel at the feet of our Lord, to receive your day's work. Receive it with unquestioning trust; and if on nine days out of ten He shall say: "Wrestle again with that temptation," will you complain? Will you not trust our Lord to help you, and to see you safely through, if you work well for Him? We never strike a truer blow for the interests of the Sacred Heart, or gain a grander victory over the powers of darkness, than when with a "Begone, Satan!" we send the devil back to hell, and maintain inviolate the purity of our souls.

The devil will often, when you are sick, try to rob you of what you know to be your greatest treasure. He knows you are weak, so he sets to work to plague you; yet you know that our Lord is very near you then, and you are giving Him glory all the time, and He is pleased. The temptation is very real pain to you, but you are ready to suffer for our Lord,

and to strike a blow for Him. Every hour of this pain of mind is worth much pain of body, and every moment of it is laying up treasure for eternity.

May every blessing that will make you nearer to our Lord come to you from the Sacred Heart, even though it take the form of bitter and sustained temptation. No virtue is gained without much labour, no virtue is preserved without constant vigilance, for the adversary of all virtue, especially of the lilies in the garden of our Lord, is ceaseless and very crafty. He is not a fair foe at all, but a liar, and ever acts as a liar ; so be not dismayed by the persistence of his attacks, nor doubtful of ultimate victory. Like St. Paul, you must "fight a good fight," and such a fight will be a prolonged one, for victory comes only after a campaign ; and a good fight must be a cheerful fight, wherefore be not distressed. Why art thou sad, oh my soul ? Hope in God, for His right arm never lets thee sink.

The enemy rages, but let your soul be

possessed in patience. Look at our Lord and say : " Master, it is all for Thee ; help me, for I love Thee, and will bear all for Thee."

## XV

### The Scourging at the Pillar

IN the many predictions of His Sacred Passion, our Lord spoke frequently of His scourging at the pillar. Nor need we wonder at this, for not only was it a punishment most dreadful, the one indeed that more than any other made Him a worm and no man, but it was so hideous an outrage on all sense of justice. Pilate had repeatedly examined our Lord, and as repeatedly had declared His absolute innocence ; Herod was equally unable to convict Him of the smallest misdeed ; yet, in spite of this, Pilate dared to say : " I find no cause in Him : therefore [to please you] I will chastise Him, and let Him go."

Imagine, if you can, the pain those

words must have caused our Lord ! Imagine, if you can, the anguish of our Lady as she heard them, and understood that in a moment her Child, who had been subject to her for thirty years, the most beautiful among the sons of men, who had gone about doing good, was to be in a hall alone, with brutal men around, infuriated with drink and malice, who would tear from His aching body the clothes she herself had woven for Him, and then with scourges rend the flesh from those sacred limbs, and cause the blood to flow in streams. Yes, thus did our Lady see her Son carried off, while no one raised a voice of protest, and our Lord, like a lamb before his shearers, opened not His mouth.

Do you know what it is to have a friend who must needs undergo some serious operation ? It is probably talked about for some time before it takes place. Must it be ? can nothing else be tried ? what is the danger ? are questions often and eagerly asked. At length it is decided

that no other remedy will suffice, and the day and hour are fixed. The surgeons arrive, and all friends are excluded from the room, and the door is shut ! How long the minutes seem ! Half an hour at length has gone, and still they are caged within those closed doors. An hour, perhaps more, goes by, and at last they come forth. It was a terrible suspense for those who love, yet they knew that the patient was in kind and skilful hands, keen to avoid all unnecessary pain, and all unconscious while under the surgeon's knife.

Does this picture at all help us to understand the sorrows of our Lady during the hour in which our Lord was scourged, for it is said to have lasted a whole hour ? It does, and it does not ; strictly, the picture fails altogether, for our Lord was taken to those who were bribed to give all the pain they could, whose sole object was to reduce Him to such a state that the Jews would be content, and might no longer clamour for His death.

Indeed, the scene baffles even the powers of Scripture to describe it. We know from contemporaneous history the terrible cruelty of those Roman scourgings. Often the poor victim died beneath the lashes, inflicted by whips made of three thongs of leather, knotted with sharp pieces of leather or of bone, that cut deep into the flesh. Yet, "for these scourges our Lord is ready ; to these strikers He gives His body ; on His back the wicked shall wreak their fury ; His heart is broken within Him, and all His limbs tremble."

Why is it so severe ? In Deuteronomy (xxv. 2) we read the law that explains its atrocity. It runs thus : "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure of the stripes be." And the sin for which that scourging atoned was awful in its measure, in its results, in its degradation of God's fair image in the soul. Yes, there arose before our Lord's eyes a vision of darkest sins, repeated again and again, carried to a pitch that cannot be

described or realized. They are deeds of darkness against the fairest of virtues ; they are deeds that defile a man and rob him, in many cases for ever, of his cleanness of heart ; they are sins committed in thought, in word, and in deed ; they are the deeds of the flesh, for which only a punishment on the flesh of the Lamb of God can atone ; they are deeds that must not be named, but whose very secrecy seemed to call for this outward mark of God's hatred and detestation of it. No sins separate men more quickly, or in a more hopeless way, from God ; hell is paved with them ; but the world of to-day winks at them, nay, applauds them, while it derides the very possibility of that virtue which makes men as angels, yea, as lilies in the garden of the Lord.

Oh, let us be strict with ourselves here, knowing no compromise or friendship with such deeds, but, with our standard fixed high, remember that we are the children of Mary Immaculate and the brethren of Jesus, carefully avoiding

the least touch of that foul fiend which strengthened the might of those cruel men, and quickened their lashes, as they tore the flesh from the limbs of Him who had said : "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

But it is not only on such mortal sins that this scene of the Passion throws its blessed light, but on venial sin also. Let us see how this is.

Consider the features of the scourging : they are, first, its cruelty and heartlessness, its total disregard to pain ; secondly, the disfigurement brought about by it. With difficulty could our Lady recognize our Lord when He was brought forth, so changed was He. He was still alive, but from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet there was no soundness in Him, wounds and swelling sores, not bound up nor fomented with oil. And thirdly, the scourging has a feature not shared by the other greater sufferings of our Lord : it is the repetition of the blows. The nails were driven in once for all, but



the scourging was long continued, while blow after blow fell. And these are the cowardly features of deliberate, venial sin.

Holy Church is the body of Christ, and we are its guardians. Yet, do we not love to take the scourge and chastise that body, not to kill it, indeed, but to be cruel to it, by our waste of grace, our determination to be our own masters, our resistance of rule, our want of zeal? After His scourging our Lord was still alive—yes, but very near to death. So is it with those who make it their policy to go as far as they can in the direction of wrong. Soon, very soon, they will go too far, and the death of the soul by mortal sin must inevitably follow. Meanwhile the scourging by the thongs of venial sin goes on, cruel, heartless, and disfiguring, reckless of the loss and danger incurred, reckless of the pain given. No scene of the Passion gives a truer ocular proof of the evil of sin than the Scourging at the Pillar.

Looking, then, on the mangled body of

our Lord, what should we pray for? and what should we have done had we been permitted to have been there? Let us do it now. Let us bear in mind that the Church is the body of our Lord, that her strength and beauty depend in great measure on our lives, on their purity, on their being clothed with graces well-used for God. Instead of scourging that body with whips of deliberate and oft-repeated sin, let us assuage its wounds, and heal them by warm hearts, tender consciences, generous wills, devoted efforts. Let us, by aiming high, declare war against all low standards, increase our sense of the evil of sin, and endeavour, by days of fidelity, of watchfulness, of duty, and of self-sacrifice, to walk in all things perfect.

## XVI

### Why art thou sad, O my Soul?

THE whole work of life and the whole joy of eternity is to love God. Our lives

here below must be lives of love, of pure, unselfish love for a great cause—the cause of God and the salvation of souls. Let us never forget the fact that we are all working for a cause. It gives such meaning to all we do, and is a basis for love and joy. This life of love takes many a shape—suffering of all kinds, physical and mental, is one of them, and one peculiarly blest by God. Pain is really only a consequence of sin, and ought to be a punishment, and nothing more. But, by God's goodness, it is a means of merit, a feeder of the life of love, the gold that makes crowns not only for those who suffer, but also for those on whose behalf that suffering is endured. May God bless you, and help you always to be true and faithful to that large measure of light and good sense and purpose with which He has in mercy enriched you! Hold fast to every particle of it—it is all so good and necessary, and once you begin to part with the least inch of your spiritual land, the enemy has got in, and at once evil is

sown, and who shall say how far it will spread ?

Ever maintain a brave and calm spirit, for a want of courage and calm is often the beginning of trouble. Sanctify your life and work by prayer. Often bear in mind the lonely tabernacles of the world ; their name is legion, for they are many, and by raising your thoughts to them, and breathing an ejaculation of homage and love to our Lord dwelling there, you are making reparation to Him for the sins and neglect of others.

We are ever learning that life is a warfare. Far from home, amid enemies and strangers, we are to fight the good fight till the end shall come. The strain would be less, if we could see more result to our work, and could feel we were succeeding in wrestling with our difficulties, if we could rest satisfied that we had done our best, and could hear our Lord tell us so. Indeed, it is the impossibility of doing this that is a great part of all trials. But were it different,

should we not run great risk of pride, and of being numbered with those “who *have* received their reward”?

And after all, what does our Lord ask of us in our daily life? Is it to succeed? No; He only asks: “Will you really try?” And any one that at the end of a day can say, “I have *tried* to-day,” may look for a blessing from our Lord, and close his eyes in sleep, filled with the peace of Christ.

## XVII

### God's Choice of Me

LET these words ever ring like sweet music in your ears. God has made millions of human beings, but He might have made millions more than He has done, or than He ever will. The fact that you exist at all is an immense gift from the love of God. He chose you to exist, while to others He has denied this boon. And once you exist, you exist for

ever, for you are endowed with immortality, and made for happiness, for God, for eternity. It was a blessed day for you the day you were born. On that day you received a gift from God, for which you will be thankful for eternity.

Now God could not do anything without an object, let alone create an immortal soul. Every insect has a purpose in God's mind and plan, "how much more you, O you of little faith!" You have got a work to do for God, quite distinct from the work of anybody else, and God expects a fruit from you which He does not look for from any one else. And if you do not do that work, if you do not produce that fruit, God will not have it. No one can do it for you; it is most definitely marked off, and a record is kept of it in the books of life.

This truth, that we are all of us creatures of great importance, is overwhelming. So often men, especially the sick, imagine they are not wanted in the world, that they are in the way, and an obstacle to

every one. It is not so. Faith does not teach us that, and there is no grandeur in that view. To adopt it, is to debase an immortal soul, and undervalue its destiny.

What, then, is your work? Ah, that you do not fully know. Why did God call you into being? No one can say. Where is the work to be done? God only knows. It may be in Chicago, or in Glasgow, or in any quarter of the globe; yet certain it is that it is a definite work, of great importance, looked for eagerly by God, and to be done by *you*, for no one else can do it.

This fact should be assimilated by all, and let the sick especially make it their own. To believe it, and to act upon it, is not to live in a fool's paradise. No; it is to make life a great reality, and full of joy and interest; it is to make God a very present Being, our daily task of immense value, and to assign to us all our true dignity.

And how are we to work out this plan for God, and to give Him this fruit? We

work first of all in the dark. There is great merit in that, for we see no results, no change from all our efforts; yet we trust God, and know for our encouragement that something great is being done. We work, moreover, with our daily graces, our little duties, our hourly opportunities, gathering up every little fragment greedily to our pile, cementing the little stones together with care that are to build the house of our eternity. So life passes, and the day of eternity surely dawns, and Jesus is standing on the shore to welcome us, because "we have finished the work God gave us to do" when He made choice of us.

## XVIII

### Difficulties at Prayer

It is well to remember that for distractions at prayer there is no *cure*, but only strong and effective remedies. The devil so cordially hates prayer, and has such a



dread of its power with God, he knows so well God's strange love of prayer, that, though he is as busy as he can be, and has so many irons in the fire, he thinks it worth his while to do all he can to ruin or spoil even the "Our Father" of a little child.

Never is he so wide-awake to torment us as in the hour of prayer, and thus he will act towards you as long as you live. So be not surprised or discouraged, if you find that distractions at prayer are continuous and violent. There is no sin in them, when they are not wilful ; on the contrary, they tend to purify your prayer, and to increase its value in the sight of God.

A most powerful remedy against distractions at prayer, is the deliberate placing of ourselves in God's presence, before we begin to pray. "I will speak to the Lord though I am but dust and ashes. Thou, God, seest me." What am I going to do? to whom am I going to speak? about what am I

going to exercise my mind and heart for the next five minutes? These are questions that should come to our aid, and steady the mind for a moment, before we launch forth into prayer. "Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." That momentary act of recollection before you begin to pray, will do more than anything to banish distractions. It brings God near to you, and makes you almost feel His presence, while it impresses upon you the solemnity and importance of what you are going to do.

And if, in the course of prayer, you find your mind losing its hold, or wandering at all, do not get feverish, or excited and troubled, but quietly again recollect yourself for an instant, and then proceed. No sin has been committed; no want of care is to be attributed to you. On the contrary, God is pleased, and will bless that prayer. His ears will be attentive again to the voice of your supplication.

As to a feeling of unreality in your

prayers, as though your heart did not re-echo the words of your lips, this must be sternly put down and set aside : it is a part of the devil's teasing, and you must laugh at him, for resorting to such petty and mean artifices to drive you from prayer. This particular trouble will probably affect you more when you are ill, than when you are well ; but ill or well, deride it, and go on as though it were not present.

Feelings of dryness and a want of satisfaction with our prayers will come from time to time, and nothing can stop them. They are good for us, and come with our Lord's full permission, to test our love for Him, and our readiness to walk in the light of His teaching, whether it pleases us or no. The greatest saints have felt them keenly, but they have but increased their appetite for prayer, and their sense of its value and necessity. It is a matter of which we should speak to our confessor, but never one to disquiet us. We are not to pray simply because we need

strength and comfort ; we are to pray because God tells us to do so. Thus prayer becomes a sacrifice, and a sacrifice offered in holy obedience.

Pray for the Church, pray for the holy souls in Purgatory, pray for those at home, for family and friends ; pray for yourself and for a happy death, the greatest of all graces.

On days when you are less well, or in great pain, do not hesitate to curtail the amount of your vocal prayer. Remember, it is made up to our Lord splendidly in other ways, and this must make you content.

Prayer and suffering ! These two ! May they ever ascend from your life to the throne of God, for the welfare of the Church, for the conversion of sinners, for the peace of Christendom, for the sanctification of your soul.

## XIX

## The Shepherds

THERE is no descriptive passage in Holy Scripture more vivid, more full of light and beauty, than St. Luke's account of the first Christmas night. It is worthy of her to whom we owe it—the handmaid of the Lord, to whom He that is mighty had done great things indeed. Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart, they never lost their freshness, and from that heart they come as rays of light, as messages of comfort and encouragement. “And there were in the same country shepherds, watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock.” We can never separate the shepherds from our thoughts of Christmas, and we cannot but wish that we knew more of them ; yet how our hearts go out to them even from the little we do know !

Most fitting it is that our Lord, the Good Shepherd, who giveth His life for

His sheep, and who calleth His sheep by name, should first be adored and acknowledged on earth by simple shepherds ! It was in those self-same fields that David had guarded his father's flocks, leading there a life of mingled contemplation and work, all clothed with solitude and obscurity, the life pre-eminently of all who would truly be shepherds and work for souls. And now other shepherds are doing the same, while hard by, in David's own city, One has come who shall sit on David's throne, and have a kingdom of which there will be no end.

Let us picture these devoted men out at night, protecting what God had given them, doing what God bade them do. Many nights had passed and nothing had happened ; but see ! to-night, an angel of the Lord, St. Gabriel, one of the seven who stand before the Lord, stood by them, the brightness of God shining round about them, so that they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them : " Fear not, for behold I

bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David"—yes, close to you, within a few yards of where you kneel, so that not only shall you know of Him, you shall also see Him! "And this shall be a sign to you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."

How this strange combination of ideas must have struck those frank and simple minds! A Saviour is born to us—but He is laid in an ox's eating-trough! "And suddenly" (what graphic power in that word!) "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will." Wonderful summary of the work of our Lord, and glorious statement of the outcome of His gracious visit to us—glory to God, and peace to men! And what did the shepherds do? They did not wait, but at once they said

to one another : “ Let us go to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that has come to pass.” We should notice in passing not only the zeal of these simple men, but also their faith. They have no doubts. They do not say : “ Let us see whether this word *has* come to pass or not,” but “ Let us go and see what has come to pass, and which the Lord by His angels has shown to us.” “ And they came with haste ! And they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger ! ” Mary and Joseph first ; and where, dear Mother, is thy first-born Babe, our Saviour, who will take away the sins of the world ? How the shepherds must have been drawn to our Lady that night, and with what simplicity and joy she would listen to their tale ! St. Gabriel had come to them, as he had come to her nine short months before, and to them he had used the self-same words, “ Fear not,” as he had used to her. All this was a bond, and our Lady’s heart would go out to them, as the first adorers



of her Child. And shall not the thoughts of Christmas help to make us love our Lady more, as we too kneel to adore her Child, who is still as an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, helpless as at Bethlehem in the Sacrament of His Love, finding a resting-place in the poor manger of human hearts !

Such is the opening scene in the life of our Lord on earth. We have been gathering lights and lessons as we have brought it before ourselves, yet there is one special lesson we may learn, a lesson most simple, yet fundamental, a lesson for those who are willing to be as little children, a lesson for the sick, a lesson after our Lord's own heart.

The story of the shepherds is a lovely unfolding of the laws that commonly regulate the dispensation of God's graces to men. There are exceptions, of course, but God as a rule acts by law, and we learn from this meditation how it is that graces are poured abroad for our refreshment and aid.

What were the shepherds doing when this great light came to them? They were doing the work God wished them to do. They were using what light and grace they had, and using it both well and gladly; nay, there was an element of hardship and suffering in their use of grace, for they were out at night, in the cold, and then it was that God gave them more. Had one of them said: "I shall not keep watch to-night; please do my work for me," how much he would have missed! The angels would have come and gone, and would not come again; and the others would have said to him who stayed at home: "We have seen Christ the Lord, our Saviour, born to us hard by in that stable last night."

Yes, then it was that grace visited these simple men, and it found them ready, for they were using grace at the very time, and the one grace well used led to another, as is ever the rule. They received the light of faith, and at once they go to adore and use the light,

finding the Holy Family, kneeling almost before the Blessed Sacrament, and thus finding all things.

Nor is the chain of graces yet complete, for not only do they practise their new-born faith, but they go forth into Bethlehem and preach the Gospel, and tell others where they may find the Child with Mary its Mother. This is God's ordinary law in the dispensation of graces to our souls, as true now as on the first Christmas night. There are so many instances of it that we must needs recognize its truth even as we must admire its beauty.

What was Moses doing when God appeared to Him in the bush of flame at Horeb, to tell him of his stupendous mission to Egypt? He was minding his flocks! What was Gideon doing when God called him to lead His people, and free them from their oppressors? He was threshing his father's wheat. What was St. Peter doing when called to be an apostle of our Lord? He was fishing or

washing his nets. Nay, what was our Lord Himself doing when the hour came for Him to go forth from Nazareth to preach the Gospel to the poor? He was working at His trade as a carpenter. And assuredly, if ever we are to do anything special for God, the call to do it, and the grace with which to do it, will come to us when we are busy with our Father's business, or it will not come at all. It will come as a crown to graces already sent and generously used, and which have prepared the way for some special grace to receive a welcome. 240, 1-35

There is one other striking and touching illustration of this sweet law of grace which may help us. It comes at the end of our Lord's life, when Bethlehem repeated itself on Calvary, and our Lord was once more as a Babe, wrapped in the fine linen that bound His wounds and laid in Mary's arms. It is the case of the good thief. In that conversion, the most marvellous and touching in the history of the world, the same law of grace is seen

in full and loveliest operation. The first grace that found its way to that soul was welcomed, though how it came, or what it was, we do not know. The certain knowledge that death is near is in itself a grace that knocks loudly at the heart. Then he began to fear, then to be sorry for his wasted life, then he saw God, and recognized by the light of a wondrous faith his God beside him on the Cross ; then he hoped for pardon, then he begged for it aloud, and then he preached Christ crucified, as no one has done before or since.

Let us learn our lesson : it is to value the post in which God has placed us, to accept it with contentment and joy, even though it be a bed of sickness, knowing it to be the best for us, and to cling to it loyally. How often we are tempted to wish for some change, to be crushed by the monotony of the daily grind, and to wish for other spheres and greater graces, to be discouraged, and almost irritated and surprised, that they do not come. The

day may come when God will call us to other work, or may visit us with a season of extraordinary grace, for His own wise purposes ; but such a day must find us watching at our post, or it will be lost and disregarded, and will but add to our responsibility, without increasing our glory. In a word, let us be true shepherds, and keep the watches, even though they be night-watches, amid the darkness of discouragement and inward desolation, over the pastures assigned to us by the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. So shall we work for God, expecting the coming of the Saviour, ready for the visits of angels who bring graces to men, and who bear aloft their prayers in turn to the throne of God. And at all times we can find the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes, with Mary His Mother, teaching and exhorting us to be as little children if we would enter the kingdom of heaven.

These are "the things that are told us by the shepherds" ; let us "hear them

and wonder at them," so simple are they, yet so true ; let us keep them, pondering them in our hearts !

## XX

### The Kings

It is not the least among the beauties of the events and sayings recorded in Holy Scripture that they may be regarded in many ways and thus be made to yield fruits and lessons most varied and sweet. The great event of the visit of the Kings to adore our Lord at Bethlehem has its direct and obvious lesson, yet it suggests others also. Indeed, the search for our Lord by these wise men from the East, inquiring where Christ had been born, anxious to pay Him due homage and glad to offer Him gifts, is but a living and lovely example of the search for Him that forms the main duty and privilege of every Christian soul. In Baptism we were made His own, and the light of

faith that then appeared is our guide, drawing us on to an ever closer union with Him, to the desire for a constant union with Him, so that we may say with St. Paul : " I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." And as we consider the perserving fidelity, the grand determination, of the Magi to find our Lord at all costs, undaunted by any obstacle, we see the spirit of desire for the closest friendship with Him who is our King, not content with any half measures, but a readiness to carry the matter by storm, by a holy violence, until the branches are truly engrafted on the Vine, and we abide in His love, living in the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and delivered Himself for us.

And so the Epiphany brings to our minds the spiritual birth of our Lord in the souls of each one of us, and shows how the life of union with Him thus begun, should grow and be intensified. He is to be our King, and we are to be His friends. No coldness should



ever exist between us ; there should be no banishment of our Lord, no welcome to His enemy. Our words should all be spoken in His name and spirit ; every deed should be begun with His blessing, and finished so as to give Him glory, that the life of union and love begun on earth should be a prelude to, and all one with, the life of hereafter in the King's true home and realm.

Where is He that is born King of God's chosen children ? He is within each soul that seeks to love and serve Him ; He is in the work that daily comes to hand ; He is in every sorrow and joy. He is to be found in the poor and suffering, in every temptation that visits us, in every sacrifice that is asked of us. He is to be found in prayer and in work, and above all in the two sources of union with Himself, divinely instituted for the crying needs of human souls, framed with all tenderness for their weakness, yet stamped with the power and majesty of God—the two Sacraments

of Confession and Holy Communion. By these we can answer the question : Where is He that is born King of God's children ? for they are the sweet forces that repair to the full any broken link of love. They are the interchange of good offices and gifts between friends : the fountains of refreshment that lead to perseverance and to zeal.

Let us look at the wise men as our instructors with regard to these two means of grace, for they may suggest to us several points as to our method and spirit in their regard, where we perchance fall short.

And first, let us notice their earnest desire to reach and find our Lord. "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you," said our Lord when about to give us the Blessed Sacrament. And desire, born of a faith that shows us our needs and assures us that such needs shall be abundantly satisfied, ought to animate every approach to the two Sacraments of union with our Lord.

Where is He that is born our King? Find Him we will, and find Him we must. The way may be long, and dark, and difficult, but we will see the Lord, we will hear His voice, we will offer Him our love. Is this always our bearing towards these sources of help? It is so sometimes, but how often they are approached in a half-hearted, uninterested, and mechanical way, because we take no pains to bring home to ourselves our need of grace, and of finding Him afresh who is born our King.

Again, let us notice that the wise men took our Lord as they found Him, and were content. His simplicity, His silence, His helplessness were no stumbling-block to them. Is it so with us? Do we not at times, inwardly at least, complain that in these Sacraments of union with our Lord He is too quiet, not making sufficient stir within us, too simple in His message, too ordinary in His demands, too commonplace in His requests? We would fain have the feelings and emotions

more stirred and excited, while, on the contrary, the visit to our Saviour and His welcome to us are rather sombre and restrained, and we feel we would wish there were more excitement and show about it. In a word, we as a rule expect too much.

And more : the wise men offered gifts to our Lord, hoping for nothing thereby, not expecting gifts in return, only a blessing from Him as signified in His acceptance of what they had thought fit to bring. No Confession, no Communion, is complete on our part unless these three gifts be offered—the gold of genuine love that is born of gratitude, of a realization of our Lord's worth and claims ; the incense of much prayer, of earnest appeal for help, of thanksgiving, of honest discussion of difficulties and needs, of trusty recommendation of our lives with their work into the hands of our Friend ; and the myrrh of sorrow and self-reproach for graces wasted—all sweetened and made fragrant by the spirit

of reparation, that brightens and relieves all sorrow for past losses, and enables our Lord to wipe away the tears from our eyes, and bid us go on our way rejoicing. Yes, go on our way—where to? Where did the Divine Child send the wise men? To their own country, but by another way. Beautiful description of the fruit of every good Confession and Communion! We are bidden go back to our own country, to our own homes with their work and surroundings, but by another way, in another spirit, with fresh strength and courage, there to show that we have not sought our King in vain, that in truth we have seen and found the Lord at Bethlehem, in the House of Bread!

And there is in all the wise men have taught us one further feature that colours every lesson, and which we should much bear in mind, if these Sacraments are to help us as they ought to do. We notice in their whole conduct and bearing the simple desire to do *their* part, and to do it to the full, with never a thought

of our Lord's part. Is it not very true that quite commonly we do the reverse? that we expect our Lord to do everything, and content ourselves with being merely passive recipients of His favours? Indeed He will do His part, and indeed He has His part to do; He has much to forgive, much to make good, much to bestow, much to promise. But we have our part also; we must seek, we must pray, we must offer gifts, we must open the heart, we must stir the will, we must make the ears attentive. Then indeed at each Confession and Communion our King will be born again within us, and if angels ask "Where is He that is born a King to-day?" the answer may be: Here, in the heart of this child, as in Bethlehem of old, in humility, in innocence, in detachment, in simplicity, in a heart full of good-will, emptied of all love of self.

## XXI

**The Assumption of our Lady**

MARY is assumed into heaven, the angels rejoice, and, in their hymns of praise, bless God for the fruits of man's redemption. They bless God that human souls, washed in the blood of the Lamb, are flocking in, to fill the vacancies caused by the fall of the rebel angels ; they bless God for the glories of Mary, who is beautiful above the sons of men, in whose lips grace is poured abroad, and who has passed to her high throne, where she stands at the King's right hand, in gilded clothing, for He greatly desires her beauty. Our Lady's life is over, and her death of longing desire has come ; her soul has gone back to God, and to it her body is united, for it could not be that the body, whence Jesus had drawn His life, should rest in the tomb or see corruption. We know no tomb of our Lady ; did we do so, it would be, next to Mount

Calvary, the most sacred spot on earth. We have no relics of our Lady ; did they exist, they would be, next to the relics of the Passion, the most prized treasures of the Church. But "all the glory of the King's daughter is within," and our Lady lives on in the love of her children, and this earth knows her no more. With her comeliness and beauty she hath set out, and proceeded prosperously to the new Jerusalem, and there she reigns, crushing the serpent's head, and dispensing graces to all her children.

The happiness of heaven is the beatific vision—to see God "as He is," and that for eternity ; and all other joys come to us together with that one. No one has so full a share of that joy and vision as our Blessed Lady. "Many daughters have gathered together riches, but thou hast surpassed them all."

Many reasons account for this : the office, the dignity, the privileges of Mary would account for it ; but one reason stands out above the rest, and is of



practical instruction to us, especially to the sick. It is our Lady's likeness to our Lord in His portion of suffering. "Ought not Christ to have suffered, and so enter into His glory?" These are words which surely St. Peter and St. Paul might hesitate to have used, but our Lord uses them Himself. And ought not Mary to have suffered, and so enter into her glory? for "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him." No cross, no crown, through the Cross to the light, is the law for all. Let us read it in the glory of Easter, and in the brightness of the Assumption, and bow our necks to the gentle yoke of Christ. Time was when our Lady could say: "O all ye that pass by the way, stay and see if there be any sorrow like unto mine." Yes, the seven Dolours bring out the glories of the Assumption; "the sword of grief has pierced the soul of Mary," and now "a crown of twelve stars" rests upon her head.

The sick indeed are tried and tested

by many afflictions and sorrows ; you chafe beneath their sharp pricks, and are surprised at times that the stream of life does not flow more smoothly. Do you forget “that through many tribulations we must reach the kingdom of God” ? Do you forget that only by the fire of pain can you be cleansed and adorned with a comeliness and a beauty, in which you may set out on your last journey, proceed prosperously at your judgement, and reign for ever with our Lady and her Son ?

Look first at your crucifix with our Lady beside it, and then at the Ascension and at the Assumption. Assuredly our Lady says to you from her throne : “Suffer patiently, suffer sweetly, suffer joyfully, with great and loving hearts ; then you will enter into glory.”

The Assumption is really the Feast of our Lady’s happy death. It is called in Latin, *pausatío* or *dormitío*, and by the Greeks, *koimesis*—words that mean the calm sleep and repose of a happy death

after a life of pain well endured. "He giveth His beloved sleep." Let us pray often, let us pray daily for this crowning grace. When you say the fourth glorious Mystery of the Rosary, let this be the favour you seek ; or say daily three Hail Marys for a happy death, that our Lady may be with you now, and at the hour of your death.

And in the joy of this going home of our Queen and Mother, look beyond the grave to the home of the blessed, to which she calls you, and where she waits to welcome you. Let us put away all discouragement at the memory of our own miserable selves and miserable past, for, in spite of it all, heaven is still open and accessible to us. Draw us after thee, dear Mother ; we will run in the odour of thy sweetness, and after this our exile we shall see the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Everything has an "after" save one alone. God is the summer, the day, the calm, that has no after. And with God

is our Lady. Oh, what will it be to be welcomed home by our Mother after a long absence, an absence full of peril and uncertainty ! In the welcome with which Mary received her risen Son from the dead, we see what is in store for us. "This, my Son, was dead and is alive ! was lost and is found ! Alleluia !"

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary, pray for us that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

## XXII

### After an Illness

DURING your illness you have been through a great deal, and it was like walking through desert places without water ; but those long weary days have done a vast work for you, and have not been thrown away. They have been as a chain by which our Lord drew you to Himself, as He has drawn many before you. These are the paths by which He entered into His

glory, and won a home in the heart of mankind. You have given Him all your pain of body and of mind, and it is in eternity now, quite changed in its aspect, and it has taught you so much. Do not dwell on it now, but close the volume, and while the lesson and fruit remain, think only of a happy future. It seems as though you had earned your consolation, and after the long, dark night, in which our Lord seemed so far away, though in reality He was very near, He shows Himself to you as the good Samaritan, not "passing by," but going near to you, and into your wounds pouring oil and wine. How true He has been to you; His ways are not ours; but we can always trust Him.

All pain of mind and body is part of our purgatory, and keeps us at the feet of God, and prevents all presumption or pride. "Let he that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall." As long as our Lord in mercy sends you pain to bear, you will be guarded from

ever thinking yourself to stand. "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me." You will find these words to be the burden of your song for eternity. Oh, let us trust the hand of God ! Do not fear your temptation, only fear your weakness, yet be strong by reason of your trust, by reason of the good-will you are ready to show to our Lord.

During your illness, you have tried to please our Lord by prayer, and probably you have never prayed better in your life, or pleased our Lord so much by trying to pray, though prayer seemed difficult and dry. And now you are better, and the pain is not so severe. What does this mean, but that you have done a work ; some desperate cause has been won, some soul is now reconciled with God, some sinner has died a good death, and is either in heaven or very nearly so, and all because of your pain, which you bore for the souls for which Jesus died ? Let this bring peace and joy to your soul ; let it bring courage and readiness for further

battles, if such be the desire of the Sacred Heart.

During your illness, it was thought perhaps you would not live long, but you have come back from the very gate of death into the midst of this world, led by the right hand of our Lord. He wants you here still, your place is not yet ready for you in heaven. Your illness had a work to do, and just as it was thought you were to take your place at the marriage-feast, a low place, probably, our Lord said : "No, my child, go up higher" ; but to get higher, your stay in the vale of tears must be prolonged. And so you left Christ for Christ, and though to-day you might have been in heaven, you are still here, and all your pain has gone to make your place at the marriage-feast a higher one, nearer God, for ever. Are you satisfied and content to wait and work yet a little while ? O taste and see how sweet is the Lord.

## XXIII

### Religion Pure and Undefiled

IN your illness, it has been your religion that has specially supported you, and, without its lights and helps, you could not have gone through it, or turned it to profit.

When you were well, you were perhaps fond of going to Holy Mass as often as you could, and by those Masses you learnt to love our Lord, and to grasp the value of His friendship. Through them a blessing has rested on this time of pain, and your sickness has been an act of homage and sacrifice to God, in which God has never failed you, never been far from you, while your faith, with its sweetness and strength, has given you force, courage, and power to combat all that has come, and has enabled you to possess your soul in patience. Indeed, there is only one solution of pain : it is the crucifix—it is God and eternity. Let



these be given up, and only darkness and the abyss of despair remain ; but bring them in, and, like the silver moon rising on the waters, all is changed, and a land comes in sight that flows with milk and honey, where Jesus and Mary dwell, where all breathes peace, where the wearied are at rest. And so your heart has dictated to you St. Philip Neri's favourite words, and you have wished to make them the summary of your life : "God alone is my portion." All must be for God, because all comes from God. Hence there shall be no wilful sin, and all pain shall be borne in the spirit of Christ crucified ; duty shall be welcomed, and self shall have no part, but all shall be for God and for God's children. Religion pure and undefiled shall be the robe and strength of your life.

But wait. Does it follow that religion is to be all sweet and smooth ? Is it to be a mere saying of " Lord, Lord " ? Oh no ; religion is a bugle-call to battle,

a fitting-on of armour carefully made, and made by our Lord, to be used as a means to victory after many a fight. Peace and rest are the result of a campaign, not of a single contest. We love to call our Lord Master, Brother, Friend, and King, but let us not leave out His title of Saviour. The other names are more placid, and speak more of peace, of docility, and the like ; but we are soldiers and our life is a warfare, if it be real life at all.

Hence, while on the one hand religion is to be all in all to you, while your heart loves and clings to those words "God alone," while this world lies vain and empty before your eyes, and eternity alone has any reality, it is at the same time an invitation to the enemy for a very real and daily struggle, for a hand-to-hand, desperate fight, which will one day cease, but only with your latest breath. No prayer will be left undisturbed, no virtue will be acquired with ease, no victory shall bring any great

measure of peace ; the very virtue you love most will be the object of the most vigorous assaults. By night and by day they will come ; nothing exists but may be turned and twisted into evil, till perchance your very brain seems to give way, and you feel as though you must have yielded to temptation, or very soon will do so, and as though you stood before our dear Lord, whom you love, whom you wish to serve in true innocence of heart, as a stained and tarnished thing, as a soldier that has not done his best, with a blush of shame on your cheek, and in your heart a feeling of disappointment, and a sort of consciousness of guilt, with a knowledge of having tried, yet ever with the uncertainty as to how you really stand.

Then it is that confession will come to your aid. Go to our Lord in humility, to ask for pardon, to ask for renewed strength. Go to our Lord with hope and joy, for all is well ; the time of your illness has been a time well spent,

and soon you will receive your Lord in Holy Communion—by which the union between your life and your faith shall be more lovingly cemented than it has ever been, in the strength of which union you will live for ever, and precisely because of which your life may be so fruitful of good, and so sure to be full of struggle and of victory.

May these lines come to your frightened soul like our Lord came walking on the waters to His disciples, at the fourth watch of the night; may your angel guardian hold them before your eyes while you read them. "My life, my faith, and then my eternity, and the bond that ties these together is my fight beneath the Captain's eye."

Lord, I am ready and am not afraid; Thou art good, and Thou art true. With Thy grace to aid me, I too will be good and true, but let me never lose sight of my weakness; and when I feel I may have swerved from Thee, let me hasten, in all humility, to acknowledge it. This

shall be my rule till I meet Thee, face to face in Thy kingdom.

## XXIV

### The Tomb of our Lord

*(For Holy Communion)*

LET us obey the summons of the angel to the holy women on the first Easter day : "Come and see the place where the Lord was laid," that we too may learn a lesson.

Nature looked its best that morning. The sun had risen, for the true Light of the world had risen too, and He who had become sin, who was despised and rejected of men, has risen from the dead, having finished the work His Father gave Him to do. The clothes that bound the wounded body of our Lord are there, and the angel points with pride to the "place where the Lord was laid," for death has no more dominion over Him.

As we rejoice in the completeness of

our Lord's victory, we learn the necessity of completely crushing whatever is amiss, of absolutely leaving the tomb or haunts of sin. So long as the least affection for it remains, so long as any bad habit has life left in it, so long as our wills and hearts are not completely turned from sin in hatred and aversion, the place where we were laid still knows us, and our victory and resurrection are incomplete.

The clothes or ties that bound us must be cast aside, and our angel must be able to point with pride to the empty tomb of sin, which knew us once but now knows us no more. The accomplishment of this depends on our generosity and perseverance, but it is in face of that epithet "complete" that we are inclined to draw back and faint. Our sins shall be given up "to a certain degree," but that is ungenerous, and a fruitful source of backsliding and loss of fervour. In the warfare we merely wound our foe, whereas we ought to slay him outright.

“Come and see the place where the Lord was laid.” Again our angel summons us, and again let us gladly obey. Where is the “place in which the Lord was laid”?

He is laid in our tabernacles, He is laid in our hearts, in Holy Communion, as often as He comes to be our guest. He seeks rest there, and would find our hearts “swept and garnished,” ready for His embrace, free of all He dislikes, as a garden in which He can roam and smell the odour of virtue. “Come, then, and see the place where your Lord was laid.” What is its present state? whom does it love? does it seek the things that are Jesus Christ’s, or does it seek its own?

Of course our hearts can never be really ready for Him, but at least the rugged stems of honest endeavour, of patient, daily grappling with our difficulties, should be growing there, soon to blossom and bear fruit. “Come, then, and see the place where the Lord was laid.” Come gladly, not with fear, and drink in with honest

gaze the real state of your hearts. See what needs amendment, feeling confident that you can do all things in Him who strengthens you.

When a new church is opened, the old building is often left standing for a time, and on the opening day the visitors compare the two with pride, and say : "See where the Lord was laid," and "See where now the Lord is laid." May your angel find the old leaven purged out and a new paste made, a new heart opened, and may he say : "This my child was dead, and is come to life again, was lost and is found, and the place where his Lord is laid is aglow with the warmth of love of things of God, for his heart is clean and well-ordered, he has risen to a new life with Christ in God."

Let us remember that our Communions are to us a pledge of our resurrection, prefigured in the resurrection of our Blessed Lord ; they must be made with care, with clean hearts and fervent wills, that when after death, our souls are in



God's presence, the angels may point to them, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, fed with heavenly manna, bright with the light of glory, and may say: "See the place where the Lord was laid."

## XXV

### The Crowning with Thorns

"My head acheth, My head acheth."

4 Kings iv. 19.

IN the predictions of His Sacred Passion, there is one chief suffering of which our Lord never spoke, namely, His being crowned with thorns; and the omission is not a little remarkable. He foretold that He would be mocked and spat upon, that He would be scourged and crucified, but never that He would be crowned with thorns. The reason may be that it was never ordered by authority. Cruel as were His judges, they never bethought themselves of anything so awful as this punishment, which of itself would have

caused death, and death very speedily, had not our Lord, in love for us, prolonged His life that He might suffer for us yet more.

It was immediately after He had been scourged till He was a worm and no man, that this barbarous punishment was inflicted. The soldiers had heard our Lord spoken of as a King, and that title had specially angered His enemies, and so they made it their special theme for sport. "He is a King, is He? Then we will deck Him out as one. See, here is a cloak that is royal in its colour, and here is a reed that will do for a sceptre; but where is the crown? It is here: press it on Him well, and let Him know that He wears a crown and is a King indeed!" And so, with force and a cruelty that defies description, they pierce our Lord's sacred head with this cap of painful thorns. The thorns would be as long as a man's fore-finger, and found a ready entrance into that aching head, already so swollen and battered with

repeated blows. Try to picture the scene to yourself, if you can : imagine you are allowed to be present at it, and are bidden report its history to our Lady, who may not be by, though she would.

“The whole head is sick, the whole heart is sad, dear Mother. Thy Son is turned in His anguish whilst the thorns are fastened : His head acheth, His head acheth, and the blood flows fast, so that His look is, as it were, hidden. Yet as a lamb before his shearers, He opened not His mouth.”

Let us now consider some features of this wondrous scene. And first, our Lord was quite alone when He suffered this agonizing pain, at the mercy of those who loathed Him, and whose sport it was to make Him suffer. He would not open His mouth to plead for mercy ; there was not one present who could do so for Him, not one to ease the pain, or to wipe away the blood that flowed in streams. There is always a peculiar anguish in pain when it is endured alone. Secondly, the punish-

ment was one that would not be chiefly observed. When brought before the people, they would see the many ugly marks of the scourges and their awful effect, but no one, perhaps, would notice the crown of thorns, or at any rate would know how deep those thorns penetrated. The crown of thorns had not been ordered, like the scourging, and no one was on the look-out to mark its results. Pilate, when he had our Lord brought forth, said, "I have scourged Him," but he did not add: "My soldiers have further crowned Him with cruel thorns, which still He bears."

Again, it was a punishment that owed its intensity not merely to its first infliction, but to its permanency. The crown was not put on and taken off; no, it was pressed down securely, and worn to the end; or rather (and worse than all), it *was* taken off many times—yes, each time that the sacred clothes were changed—and then brutally put on again, and worn till death. And it was a punish-

ment that owed its anguish not to one thorn, but to the whole number pressing together ; it was this aggregate that was so severe : " His head acheth, His head acheth."

Lastly, and perhaps more than all, it came on the top of so much that had gone before. The long night of agony and reproach, without sleep, or food, or any repose, the many journeyings, the countless blows, the disgusting spittings, the mockery, the terrible scourging ; oh ! is it not enough and to spare ? No, there must be more, and, like a lamb before his shearers, He opened not His mouth !

Surely this scene draws us to our Lord, and may it encourage us to learn its lesson ! Indeed, there is perhaps no scene in the Sacred Passion that applies to us more, and to the sick especially, than this one. We often speak of our cross as though we shared mainly in the Crucifixion ; but should we not think first of our thorns ? The little pricks of daily life ! How sharply they prick ! how

many they are ! and we have to bear them alone, very often unobserved, and hence without help or sympathy. Nobody thinks much of them ; we have to bear them for long months or even years, without a change ; or perhaps they are changed at times, but are soon driven in again, and hurt the more. And they all press together ; yes, they are a crown, closely plaited, and meant to lead to a crown, and they come on the top of much else that is painful and irksome in the way of life.

Give them their name : they are our work, our companions, our pain ; they are even Almighty God Himself, in His ways of dealing with us, and in His demands upon us ; they are above all ourselves, our whims, our likes and dislikes, our hasty dispositions, our inability to have our own way. "We are turned in our anguish, while these thorns are fastened ; our head acheth, our head acheth ; the whole head is sick, the whole heart is sad."

Yet by these thorns we are meant to acquire great merit and to do great good. "Patience hath a perfecting work": let us learn that lesson from our meditation. Oh, the vast stores of merit that we have lost for ever, through our wanton chafing beneath our crown of thorns! Oh, the harm we have done to others, because we have driven their thorns in the more deeply in our irritation, because we had to endure some pricks ourselves.

Let us follow our Lord, station by station, along the road of the Cross, and as we see Him fall three times, and by the very falls drive in the thorns more deeply into His sacred Head, ask Him to give us more patience with ourselves, more patience with others, more patience beneath the gentle yoke of Christ, that we may be filled with the charity of Christ, which is patient, which is kind, and in our patience may possess the souls for which the Precious Blood was shed!

## XXVI

### The Apparition at the Sea of Tiberias

WE owe the account of the apparition of our Lord to His disciples at the Lake of Tiberias to St. John, the beloved disciple. St. Peter had said to the other disciples : " I go a-fishing." " We also come with thee," was the reply. " And they went forth and entered into the ship, and that night they caught nothing." How eagerly the disciples, with St. Peter as their leader, go forth to their ordinary work ! They are not tired of it, though it is their trade of many years standing, and a hard life it is to be a fisherman, exposed to many dangers and disappointments. They persevere in their toil, for it is night, the best time for a plentiful catch, but " that night they caught nothing " !

We so often experience something



of this kind. We go a-fishing, full of zeal and hope, cheered perhaps by kind companions who share our toil. But our work is checked, and seems to bear no fruit; we catch nothing! The night, too, seems long, and dark, and cold. Surely our post is a hard one; surely God is asking too much from us, more than we can give. Time after time we try, and let down the net for a draught, or at least for a few fish, but we catch nothing. We can only say: "Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing." But is it what we catch that our Lord looks to first? No, He values the labour expended first and foremost. The catch is made somewhere, for never yet were prayer and pain offered to God without a grace descending, nor ever shall be. But let every one that would serve God remember that results are nothing. It is our persevering effort alone that our Lord values, and it is *He* that giveth the increase.

So "when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore," and ordered a cast to be made on the right side of the ship ; "and now they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes." What a picture is here given us ! It is the end of the long night of labour and pain ; the sun has risen, the morning is come, and Jesus stands on the shore of eternity, to welcome and reward those who toiled through the long night and seemed to take nothing. This is for us as well as for other disciples ; the long and fruitless night must end, and in the bright morning of the day of eternity "Jesus stands on the shore, and His reward is with Him," and we shall say, "It was the Lord : the Lord was in that place all the time, yet I seemed not to know it." Thus it is that the sick may sow in tears, but shall surely reap in joy.

## XXVII

**The Visits of our Lord**

BEHOLD, He stands at the door and knocks, for our Lord has thought of us, and has come of His own accord to pay us a visit. "There is some one at the door," and we know it ; let us hasten to let Him in, that He stay not outside in the cold.

But why does our Lord stand there at all? Why does He not walk in? Are we not His own, and is He not our Shepherd and we His sheep, bought with great price? Yes, but still we are free ; our wills are our own, and the King's friends are all volunteers. Our Lord must appeal to us, and invite us. "The voice of my beloved knocking: open to me, My sister, My love, My dove, for My head is full of dew." He knocks, sometimes loudly, sometimes softly ; sometimes by sending trials and sorrows, sometimes by books,

or a stray remark in a sermon or conversation, sometimes by recalling the truths of our faith, the facts of life and eternity ; but still He is always knocking, His grace coming to rouse and support us. Do we answer : " Come in ! " or " Not at home " ? When *we* knock, we expect to be heard, and speedily, but our Lord must often wait !

We know well how unpleasant it is to be kept waiting on a doorstep ; we tug the bell, and knock the knocker hard, and often we hear sound within and know our friends *are* at home, but at length we are told they are *not* at home ! Not at home to *us* ! Yet our Lord never seems to grow weary, never says, " I have been here so long, and now I go, to return no more."

" If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him ; I will come and heal him, I will come and sup with him, and he with Me." Let us rise up to open to our Beloved. Yet when doors have long been unused,

they stick, and are opened but gradually and with difficulty. So it may be with us, if for long we have kept our Lord outside, if we have closed the door and kept feast with ourselves, entertaining our passions, entertaining the spirit of the world. It will then take time to open the door to the full, and will require both perseverance and energy. But be not affrighted, for through the crevice we shall see the Master, and hear His voice, and meet His smile, as He says : " Make haste, for to-day I must abide in thy house. Open to Me, my beloved, for My head is full of dew. Behold My heart that has so loved men, that has so loved you."

And soon a supper is made. Yes, it is the evening meal, for in a sense we are all at the evening of life, seeing that at any moment the one clear call may come, and our prayer must be : " Stay with us, Lord, for the day is far spent." At once our Lord is at home with us, and makes us feel at home with Him. We have little to offer Him, but we may offer the tears

of our contrition for His drink, and our good purposes for His meat, and He is pleased. He has brought us a white robe of innocence in which to feed with Him, and His provision for us is that sweet food we call peace of heart, the friendship of God, to be crowned by the bread of angels, a true foretaste of our joy in our home hereafter.

Such is our Lord's conduct to our souls. To-day, then, if you shall hear His knock, harden not your heart, for now is the acceptable time. Open to Him, welcome Him, that He be your Saviour, not your Judge. The day is fast coming when that constant and thoughtful Friend will knock for the last time ; it will be the "dire summons at our door" to leave this world for the next. It should be a passage from a vale of tears to the vision of the fruit of Mary's womb. To all previous knocks we may have turned a deaf ear, but that one we shall hear ; all previous knocks we may have disobeyed, but that one we must obey.

Let our loins then be girt, and our lamps burning brightly ; they will be so, if we have been attentive to the visits of our Lord in this life. He will have been our constant guest in life, we shall be His guests and courtiers in eternity.

## XXVIII

### Sunday without Mass

SUNDAY is called the Lord's Day, for it is the special day on which God should be praised by His creatures. Let His Will be done at least on Sunday, and that Will is to receive sacrifice from His children. This morning the bells of the Christian world rang out a merry peal, to invite all the faithful to praise the Lord and offer gifts to His Name. Were those bells lost to you ? Could you say, "They have no message for me ; I cannot offer the great Sacrifice to-day, for the sick are debarred from that ?" Oh no ; you

can go in spirit to Mass to-day ; you can be present with all who bear the name of Christian, and your sacrifice shall be embalmed and sweetened by many a welcome ingredient. Obedience is there, and glad submission too ; a little pain will enter in, and a cheerful giving up of self, most welcome to a Father "who loves a cheerful giver."

A blow which we expect gives less pain than one that is unexpected ; and a sacrifice which we know will be asked of us, as a rule costs less than one which we had not anticipated, though, if well made, it loses none of its merit in consequence. You knew well last night that to-day our Lord would ask you to please Him by giving up Mass and Benediction, by staying in your room all day.

And in the early hours of to-day, you made that sacrifice ; it cost you a great deal, but you made it gladly, from the heart as to the Lord, and into your mouth we may put these words of the Psalmist :  
" I have lifted up my hands to Thy com-



mandments, O Lord, which I love : and I have been exercised in Thy justifications.' This will prove the history of to-day ; with your hands you grasped the law of God this morning, and you are being exercised, trained, and moulded by it all day, while God has been making you "just," that is *holy*, more ready for Himself, and such a day cannot be a day lost.

Indeed, no Sunday is a blank day for the sick. It is on Sunday especially that we offer sacrifice to God : so do the sick as much as any one on the face of the earth. They are present in spirit at Holy Mass ; they can make a spiritual Communion ; they receive our Lord's blessing, and offer to Him all the pain and disappointment of the day—a noble offering gladly made, most welcome to the King. Our Lord wished you could have been at Mass to-day, as much as you wished it yourself, but He wished you more *not* to be at Mass to-day, and you gladly acquiesced in this desire of His Sacred Heart. Why He so wished it, you do not know, but

you may trust Him to have had a good reason. What He does, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter ; and you may trust Him to give you a blessing, both now and in eternity, for the sacrifice you made to Him this morning.

Nevertheless, a Sunday without Mass, without Benediction, is always a trying day to the sick. The music of the *Gloria in excelsis* is enough to drive away many a cloud, but this you have not heard, nor have you knelt with other courtiers around the throne of the great King, and seen the Lamb of God "as it were slain" on behalf of the sins and needs of men. Yet your day may have been as fruitful, possibly more so, as that of many who have been able to be present at everything. A sacrifice was asked of you, and you made it both fully and cheerfully ; you made a virtue of necessity and offered all your pain and disappointment to our Lord, and it came from a contrite and humbled heart, which He can never despise.

## XXIX

**On the Bridge**

IN the worst storms at sea, when the outlook is truly appalling, and the question in every mouth is "Will she pull through it?" the captain stands on the bridge, giving orders, cool and calm, yet does not do the work himself. Others do the work, yet when the storm is over and the ship has reached the port, the credit is given in chief measure, and rightly so, to the captain, who stood still on the bridge and thus braved the winds and waves. A storm is now passing over you, a heavy cloud, and you wish to be busy and active, as one of the crew; but our Lord says you are the captain of the ship, and bids you mount the bridge, there to stand cool and calm, apparently inactive, yet effecting in reality great things. You would do much to help others, but it is your duty to confine yourself cheerfully to the bridge,

and never to go on deck. From the bridge you can pray, and offer the sacrifice of your will to the higher will of our Divine Lord ; from the bridge you can cheer all on the deck by your words of sympathy and by your patient charity, and thence you can invoke our Lady, Star of the Sea, to be a mother and a refuge to all.

The storm may not be a long one, but every hour of it is fraught with opportunity and merit. Gather it all, and win your laurels to the full, but win them on the bridge. It is hard for you to kick against the goad, but bend your will to that of our Lord, though it be pain to do so, and say often in the day, " Father, not my will, but Thine be done."

### XXX

#### **The Better Part**

ONE drop of the Precious Blood of our Lord was enough to redeem the world,

yet it was shed to its last drop for us. Why is our Lord thus "a man of sorrows," nay, "a worm and no man," not content till the last drop is shed? It is to convince us that He really loved us, a proof of the generosity of His love for us. Did He not say in praise of St. Mary Magdalen: "She has chosen the *better* part"? A good part would do, but, like our Lord, noble souls ever choose the better. Generosity must be met with generosity. God must have the best we can give, and what we give, we must give in the very best way. This is our right principle, and the sick have many a chance of choosing, with a choice of love and preference, this better part.

It is a principle that guides us also in temptation to sin, for generous souls always keep well on the safe side, crushing the very beginnings of evil, with no thought of self, only desirous to be very near to God and to maintain the spotless whiteness of the soul. And how richly does it aid us at times of sacrifice also,

when God seeks for something at our hands ! Then we must give Him all He wants, and give it gladly, almost pressing it upon Him, though it costs us much. This is the better part, and often it comes your way ! It is hard to human nature, but beautiful in the light of faith, sweet to a heart that is generous with our Lord. Let this standard ever be yours !

## XXXI

## A Night Thought

JUST beyond the reach of our senses, there is the great world of spirits, into which one day we shall be ushered, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil. God reigns there, and surveys His creation, over which He has placed His angels to be its guardians. They ascend and they descend : they ascend to bear our prayers to the throne of God, they descend to bring us

graces and lights, and in their hands they bear us up, for they have charge of us, lest we dash our foot against a stone.

All through the long hours of to-day, God and His angels have been very near to you ; they have seen all, and have noted every pain, and in their hands you have been borne all day. Had you rebelled, had you murmured against your lot, had you not at least tried to give glory to God through the gloom of the day, the gentle hold of the angels must have given way, and you would have dashed your foot against a stone, and would now be lame, and unable to walk to-morrow in the way of God's law. But as it is, you are not even foot-sore, and to-morrow you will walk, as you have walked to-day, onward, to the Mount of God, to the better land that flows with milk and honey, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Onward, Christian soldier ! Jesus bids us fight for God and the right, and for Mary, the Queen of Heaven.

## XXXII

## The Holy Name

OUR Lord submitted to the rite of circumcision without any necessity, for He was sinless, even as our Lady later on submitted, though without necessity, to her purification, that both the Son and the Mother might teach us obedience to law and true humility. Circumcision was the rite by which every male Jew entered into the covenant of God with Abraham, and became a partaker in its privileges and blessings. It was a Sacrament of the Old Law, corresponding in its work and place to Baptism in the New. It was a law imposed on the Jews under penalty of exclusion from the people of God, and was usually performed at home.

In our Lord's case, it was probably performed in the cave of Bethlehem, and very likely by the hands of either our Lady or St. Joseph. The Precious Blood thus



flowed for the first time before Mary's eyes; enough, and more than enough, was shed to redeem the world, but it was not shed for that purpose. The drops that then flowed were a pledge of all that was to follow in the Passion and on the Cross. "Our Lord," as Peter of Blois says, "who was to work salvation in the midst of the earth for thirty years, from His very cradle, from His mother's breast, began the business of our salvation, and tasted the first-fruits of His Passion."

It is interesting and instructive to note that on the Feast of the Circumcision in past centuries, two Masses were assigned, one of the Feast, and one of our Lady. At Christmas, we cannot speak much of our Lady, for our thoughts and words are all centred in our Lord; but on the octave of Christmas, we show forth the part that Mary played in the Incarnation, and though two Masses are no longer assigned, the one that is said abounds in references to her, and the Vesper Psalms of the Feast are those of

our Lady. And thus we think of the Mother and the Child, and contemplate her face so lit with smiles, her heart rejoicing in God her Saviour, as she discloses the name her Child is to bear.

She had heard that name from St. Gabriel, but has kept it, pondering over it in her heart, and now she reveals it. It is a Name that is above every name, the one by which men shall be drawn to God, and the name by which every child of Mary shall be known. If his name be not Jesus, he is none of hers. How is this ?

Our Catholic forefathers hesitated to give the name of Mary to their children, out of reverence, and because they knew those children could never resemble their Mother to the full. But, though the name of Mary is now, and rightly, given to almost every Catholic child, the name of Jesus is never given ; yet every one of us should bear the Name in spirit, and should lead a life such that it may be summed up in that adorable Name, a life such that at the sight of it the angels rejoice,

the devils tremble and fly, and men are moved to imitation.

What name do we bear? The first is the name of Christ, for we are Christians. But that name was *given* to us; we had not to acquire it, or to work for it. It sums up what God has done for us, not what we have done for God. It tells us of God's visiting His people, of His speaking to them by the mouth of His only Son, of that Son's work on our behalf, of the good things of the Lord, of the gifts of the Master, of the promise of eternal life, of the kingdom of light and peace to which we are called. But the name of Jesus must be ours also. "Freely you have received, freely give." Much has been done for us, and we must do something in return; we must bear the office and spirit of the Holy Name of Jesus, which means Saviour. We must be the saviours of one another, healing the wounds of one another, bearing one another's burdens, and we shall in our measure be worthy not only of the name

of Christ, the anointed of the Lord, but also of the name of Jesus Saviour, who went about doing good.

How are we to heal others? First, by keeping in good spiritual health ourselves, else we be told: "Physician, heal thyself!" By lives of regularity, by regular prayer, and regular sacraments; by lives that keep ever in touch with God, that look to God, that are spent in His presence, and are filled with work done for His cause. Thus shall we spread the light of truth, and make the force of good example felt; thus shall we make a protest against the disease of sin, and reparation to the Sacred Heart.

And in our active work for others, how shall we heal their wounds? By kindness; by always being kind—kind in word, kind in thought, kind in deed; never speaking scandal, never picking holes, covering every wound and failing with the clean linen of charity, that the heart of mankind may beat less heavily, that the world of men may rejoice more

fully in God its Saviour, who bore the name of Jesus, and wished the spirit of that name to be uppermost in the lives of all. Each one may ask himself : Is my life spiritually healthy and sound, vigorous and regular ? Do I go about doing good by the sweet apostolate of kindness, or do I, by want of charity, open wide and make to bleed afresh the wounds of my neighbour ?

“ My Lord, from this day I take up my cross and follow Thee—I will look back no more. Help me to observe Thy new commandment, to love my neighbour as Thou hast loved me.”

### XXXIII

#### The Sorrows of our Lady

WE have often heard it said, and by experience we probably know that it is true, that the pains of the mind are far keener than those of the body. Pain of the body may be, and often is, most

terrible, but it can usually be eased by medicines and other curatives, and in any case it cannot last very long, for it must needs kill the body that has to endure it. But pain of the mind may be terribly severe, and it is not possible to relieve or to cure it ; nay, often it remains unknown to all except the sufferer, and it may last for years, and take countless shapes. Moreover, we must remember that the nobler and the more pure a creature is, the more intensely does that creature feel and realize the pain. Give the same blow to a man and to a beast, and the man will feel the blow the more keenly, because his nature is so much more noble. Hence no one ever felt pain, whether of the body or of the mind, like our Blessed Lord ; and next to Him, no one ever felt pain like our Blessed Lady, the lily among thorns. She suffered a martyrdom great as the sea, in order to be like her Son in all things, and, in the designs of Divine Providence, that she might be a fitting mother for each of

us ; for we are drawn to our Lady the more intimately because she stood by the Cross and suffered, even as we are drawn to our Lord the more passionately because He loved us and delivered Himself for us.

Our Lady suffered only in her soul. No rude blow or cruel thorn was ever allowed to touch that virginal flesh, from whose blood our Lord had drawn His very life. But a sword was to thrust itself through her soul, that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed. Let us try to understand her sorrows, that out of our poor, stony hearts some thoughts may be let loose that may both comfort and guide us. Let us pass rapidly through each scene of the wondrous drama of her Dolours.

And first, our Lady is at the Temple in Jerusalem, a spot she loves—a spot she knows so well. She has gone a journey with her Babe in her arms, singing the old Gradual Psalms of the pilgrims, as the hills of God's city came in view. She rejoiced at the things that were said to her, she would go to the

house of the Lord ; she lifted her eyes to the mountains whence help should come to her ; and forthwith a revelation awaits her, of which perchance she had at least a suspicion, a revelation that lights up for her all prophecy concerning her Child, and tells her the lines on which God's redeeming work would be effected. The Cross of Calvary is clearly shown in Simeon's words, and the desolation of Gethsemane is foretold to her, for her Saviour is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many, and her own soul a sword shall pierce.

Yes, if Jesus is not to reign in every heart, He must needs suffer ; and if He suffers, Mary must suffer too, and Simeon's words do but express, as far as human language can, the extent of her pains.

What thought is here revealed ? what pain is here spoken of ? It is the pain which souls experience when they first realize and bring home to themselves that they must suffer with our Lord, if they would hope ever to reign with Him.



This is a pain indeed, and the mother of many more. We would like the lines from earth to heaven to be laid differently ; we would fain have the service of God to be easier, more free from strife, not so stamped from first to last with the Cross. And hence it is that many go away, many never start at all, many turn back, and all for the want of Mary's generosity. But her sanctity took fresh shape, and soared aloft on wings of love at the breath of Simeon's words ; she embraced the Cross, and pressed her suffering Child to her breast more closely, as she said to herself : " I must suffer with Him, and I shall reign with Him." Let us do the same ; launch out into the deep, and be generous to our Lord.

Pass on to the second dolour, the flight into Egypt, and picture that Holy Family driven away into exile by a long road to a heathen land, in the darkness and cold of the night. What pain is here disclosed ? First it is the pain of change. The little home at Bethlehem must be broken up,

and a new one sought for far away. Fresh plans must be made—a new beginning altogether, just when things were so peaceful and undisturbed. And it came so suddenly, too, yet not one word of complaint, only a prompt and trustful obedience. Many of us, especially the sick, must have felt this, when the old order changes and gives place to new. It was for our good, but we felt it keenly. How have we faced the call that God sent us?

But more. Our Lady then felt one of our keenest pains—the pain of being misunderstood, misreported, misrepresented. Kind deeds are given a sinister, wrong interpretation, and things untrue and distorted are laid at our door. So it was in this dolour of our Lady. She had to flee away, and her old home never knew her again. Even so we must flee away from old hearts and affections that once knew and cheered us on, and we never are enthroned there again. She was hunted away from home because, forsooth, evil

men believed her Son was to be a king, and to oust other kings from their throne. It was nothing of the kind ; His kingdom was not of this world ; He would disturb no one, nor deprive them of their riches. But that was said and believed ; gossips and busybodies circulated it keenly, and hence Mary suffered.

We pass on to the third scene of sorrow, the loss of our Lord for three long days. Let us try to imagine the anguish of our Lady during those two nights and one long day, looking for her Child, and asking for Him on all sides, but finding no trace of Him. He had been entrusted to her, and she was, as it were, responsible for Him.

What is our thought here ? what pain is this ? It is the pain of seeing our work yield no fruit—a special pain of the sick. We have tried very hard, and have done our best ; we have made sacrifices for what God asked of us ; no labour has been spared, and we have clung to our post for perhaps twelve years, as Mary

had clung to our Lord—perhaps for even more. And at the end we have lost all, and have nothing to show. Oh, this is hard for flesh and blood, but it is the pain of Jesus dying in desolation on Calvary, it is the pain of Mary at the three days of loss. Let us take heart; no work for God is really lost, but, when it seems to be at its worst, let us be the more diligent, and seek and find our Lord in the Temple, in the Sacrament of His love.

And what of the fourth sorrow of our Blessed Mother—the meeting Jesus with His Cross? It was one which in a way she might have spared herself, yet how fitting that these two, the Mother and the Son, should meet on the way, and go together to the holy hill? No words can describe that scene, when our Lord, crushed by His heavy Cross, and clothed in a robe of wounds and bruises, met His Mother. What is our thought here? what pain is this?

It is first of all the pain of being

useless—of seeing a true, kind friend suffer, and being unable to do anything to assuage the pain—a feeling that calls for resignation indeed, and an earnest prayer to God that He at least would help, and so direct what is taking place that it may lead to good. It is, moreover, the pain of longing to get near to our Lord, and of not being able to do so. It is the pain of those who suffer from dryness at prayer, from a disrelish for the work obviously given them by God to do ; nay, even from a want of sweetness and comfort at confession and holy Communion. The look of our Lord is hidden, and we do not seem to recognize Him. Our Lady suffered thus ; she could not recognize Him, but the eyes of her faith pierced that disfiguring veil of blood, and it was the same sweet Child of Nazareth, who, for our sakes and for Mary's sake, refrained from resting His aching head on His Mother's bosom. Our Lady only said "Fiat" : what do we say ? Do we understand that at those times we are, as

it were, meeting our Lord with His Cross, and that if He hides Himself, it is only for our good? His eyes are filled with blood in love for us, so that we cannot recognize Him, yet it is Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

And now Calvary has been reached, and our Lord is stripped of His clothes, and laid on His bed of death; the fifth dolour has begun, and for three hours Mary stands by the Cross of our Lord, true to the end. It is the end of three-and-thirty years, and what will the future be? Have we ever knelt by the death-bed of one dear to us, perhaps in the still and solemn night, and seen life slowly pass away? What pain is this? It is the pain of the parting of friends; and who ever felt it like our Lady? Life has changed, the world can never be the same again, and the future must be faced without the old props, without the old faces to cheer, or the old associations to comfort.

At the foot of the Cross another thrust of the sword must pass through Mary's

soul, as the lifeless body of her Son is laid in her arms, and she learns that in very truth from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet there is no soundness in Him, wounds and swelling sores that are not bound up nor fomented with oil, and now it is too late to do so.

What is this pain? It is the pain of the thought of brighter days that once were ours, but now seem to have gone, and gone for ever. It is the pain which many souls feel, namely, that in the days gone by they were more fervent, and loved our Lord more, and made greater progress in His service; but now somehow they have gone back, and old, fervent resolves no longer set their will aflame. Our Lady felt this as she surveyed those wounded limbs. They were not always so; and they shall not always be so; nor shall our hours of disconsolateness last for ever, but the sun will shine again, and darkness be dispelled.

Lastly, there is the burial of our Lord, preceded by the last look at His sweet

face, and then all is over, and Jesus is carried out to burial, the only Son of His mother, and she was a widow. What is our thought here? what is this pain? It is the pain of being alone, often coupled with the pain of not being wanted. Oh, how hard this is to bear and to master! Our Lady bore it, and mastered it too, yes, and how? In her own strong and beautiful way—the way for us, her children, also. What is it? By forgetting self, and thinking only of others! By trying to be kind in any and every way possible to us! This is our Lady's secret, and her master-touch! Go to that upper room at Jerusalem on the first Good Friday night, and meet there the company of the apostles and disciples. Who is the life of that little community? It is our Lady. She forgets herself; she blesses Peter as he kneels to confess his guilt; she consoles Magdalen as she kisses the Mother's feet, for she can no longer kiss those of the Son; she comforts all, and encourages all, and prays for all. This is



a charity which the floods of grief cannot drown, which many waters cannot quench. And there is our lesson, if we are wise and true children of our Lady.

“O all ye that pass by the way, stay and see if there be any sorrow like unto mine.” So it is our Lady calls us. We indeed only “pass” by the way of the Cross, and in comparison with our Lady we do but touch it, as with our fingertips; but she “stayed” upon it, from Simeon’s prophecy to the end, and for a long fifteen years after Calvary had been left. She was then the Mother of sinners, able to teach them what she had so practised, as the sword went through her soul.

May these thoughts help a little, by God’s grace, to make us tread life’s way with bolder, gladder step, hard though it may be; let us recognize humbly that the roughness and hardness of life’s road is not God’s work, but the work of cruel, repeated sin, and that whatever moisture comes to allay its dust, is the dew of God’s

forgiving love. So let us learn the true meaning of our pains, and bear them better and more fruitfully, in close union with the Sacred Passion of our Lord and the sorrows of our Immaculate Mother.

## XXXIV

## Words on Prayer

“ He ever lives to make intercession for us.”  
(Heb. vii. 25.)

WHAT a picture of our Lord is given to us in these words, showing forth His constant thought for us, His interest in us, His power on our behalf ! “ Always living to make intercession for us ” ! The one occupation of His Sacred Heart in the heavens above, in our tabernacles on earth, is to stand between us and His heavenly Father, as “ mediator,” screening us from the anger we so justly deserve, bringing down blessings for us, making intercession for us in His own

words from the Cross : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Such was His occupation at Bethlehem, and on the mountains when He passed the night in prayer ; such, too, on the Cross, in the Blessed Sacrament, and now in heaven. So that we are "rooted and built up in Him," depending upon Him, and He so faithful "not to leave us orphans"—nay "always living to make intercession for us." How little we think of how near our Lord is to each of us ! We are called to be citizens of a heavenly country, and we are almost there already, in sight of its inmates, who pray for us, and always under the eye of our Lord "who ever lives to make intercession for us."

But there are few that come to the solemn feast, and our power of making intercession is not used, and the interests of Jesus suffer in consequence.

When Moses with the people of Israel fought against Amalec, he "stood on the

top of the hill, having the rod of God in his hand. And when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel overcame; but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame." Even so does our Lord plead for us with His sacred hands "on the hill, with the rod or the power of God," and Israel gains the day. But "the hands of Moses were heavy, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands on both sides. And it came to pass that his hands were not weary till sunset." Even so must we stay up our Lord's hands, and "they will not grow weary until sunset," until the end.

How is it that we so little use our power of intercessory prayer? We should surely pray for what our Lord holds so dear and so ardently longs for—the conversion of sinners, the good deaths of all, the liberty and exaltation of the Church, the spread of the faith, the increase of vocations, peace among nations, and the like. These are the interests of Jesus; for "these He ever

lives to make intercession," yet looks to us to support His hands. "Oh, the unfathomable sweetness of this mystery of prayer! One of the ends for which we came into the world was to make intercession. One of the ends for which our Blessed Saviour shed His Precious Blood was that we might be able to make acceptable and efficacious intercession. Let us, then, betake ourselves to intercession, as if it were our trade."

At Mass, at Benediction, at Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in our prayers generally, in talking with our Lady and St. Joseph, let us pray and intercede for what we need, for what others need, for what the Church needs, for what the world needs. To a certain extent we shall be acting in the dark, not seeing the result and fruit of our prayers; but we know that all prayer is answered in God's good time, in God's good way.

Thus will our sphere of usefulness and influence for good be widened greatly.

“What mean these days of withered prayer,  
Of dead, unflowering praise?  
Wake, wake me, Lord! Arouse me. Let Thy fire  
Loosen these icicles and make them drop  
And run into warm tears; for I aspire  
To hold Thee faster, dearer, warmer, nigher,  
And love and serve Thee henceforth without  
stop!”

Holy Scripture speaks of our prayers as of incense rising from the earth to the throne of God. “And an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel!”

The path of prayer is the King's highway from earth to heaven. This royal path leads the soul into the Eternal Presence, there to plead her cause with

her Creator, there to converse, in the humble spirit of child-like affection, with her heavenly Father, there to receive His good and perfect gifts. It was opened for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, was consecrated by His prayers and sufferings, was illuminated by His Ascension into heaven. In a word, prayer is the commerce of the soul with God through Jesus Christ in the supreme affair of our salvation and perfection, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh to the Father but by Me."

Our Lord has shown us how to pray, and has insisted on the necessity of praying often. He has emphasized God's willingness to hear our prayers, so that prayer is the food of the soul, the medicine for all troubles, the bond of union by which we are kept in touch with the whole court of heaven. "Weeping, thou shalt not weep, for at the voice of thy cry, as soon as He shall hear, the Lord will answer thee."

Now there is one form of prayer—easy, delightful, and effective—strongly recommended, yet much and strangely neglected. It is Ejaculatory Prayer. What does an ejaculation show? The answer to this question shows why it is so pleasing to God. It shows that we are conscious of a sense of our weakness and insufficiency, of our proneness to evil, and of utter dependence upon God.

An ejaculation is a very act of humility, the spontaneous cry of the soul for help in its hour of need, and “the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.” It is, moreover, an act of confidence in His readiness at any time to help us. It is an act of faith in God’s nearness to us, in His constant and loving supervision of us, in the fact that He sees us always, and knows our most secret thoughts. “Cry to Me, and I will hear thee ; call upon Me in the day of trouble, for I am nigh unto all them that call upon Me. In what hour soever I shall call upon Thee, behold I know



Thou art my God.” Our conversation is in heaven, says St. Paul ; our heavenly Father, our blessed Mother, the angels and saints are all around us, and by the aspirations of our hearts we profess our faith in this. Lastly, an ejaculation is an assertion of the value of a pure soul, of the hideousness of sin, of the desire to overcome the temptation that then besets us, an assertion of the need of grace and help, else we fall. “The Lord will be entreated in favour of His servants ; pray, then, to the Most High that He may direct thy way in truth.”

Consider further the advantages of Ejaculatory Prayers. They are so short, and are consequently free from distractions ; they are richly indulged, and thus bear the Church’s special blessing and approval ; and they fill our lives with prayer. They keep us in God’s presence and prevent our having any idle moments, but rather make our whole lives into acts of praise.

An ejaculation interrupts no duty ; we have even time for an ejaculation while dipping our pen into the ink. Wherefore, while walking in the streets, while going up and downstairs, while at our work, let constant ejaculations, bearing on their wings the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, escape our lips, and like caged birds that have gained their freedom, they will fly home—and return with a speedy answer.

The holy name of Jesus is the best of all ejaculatory prayers, and should constantly be on our lips. As oil poured out on the troubled waters of our soul, it brings refreshment, strength, and calm. It is the name which Mary first uttered with such tenderness and delight ; the name which St. Joseph spoke with such reverence and devotion ; the name at which “every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth doth bow,” a name of sweetness to hearts that droop, a name of meaning to hearts that believe, a name of power to hearts that are in danger, a name of comfort and hope to those in pain.

“I shot an arrow into the air . . .  
I breathed a song into the air . . .  
Long, long afterwards, in an oak  
I found the arrow still unbroke.  
And the song from beginning to end,  
I found again in the heart of a friend.”

This gift of prayer, of being able to hold constant and sweet intercourse with God, this marvellous power by which the treasures of divine grace are poured abroad, this golden key by which the flood-gates of divine mercy are unlocked, is ours, our very own, our dignity, our joy, our source of strength and hope, through Jesus Christ, by whom we are “sons” of God, and dare to cry, “Abba, Father.”

How is it that prayer is not more to us than it is? more sweet, more attractive, more satisfying? Is it not because (among other reasons) we begin to pray “with sadness, or of necessity,” whereas “God loveth a cheerful giver”? So to begin is to court failure, to maintain a disrelish for this holy exercise, and to cramp its

effect. "Give glory to God *with a good heart*, and diminish not the firstfruits of thy hands. In every gift show a cheerful countenance, and sanctify thy tithes with joy."

Assuredly to begin to pray as though it were a task, to enter this holy exercise like idle scholars approach their books, "with sadness or of necessity," feeling it irksome all the time, glad when it is over, like idle scholars released from school, is indeed to ruin it, to sap its sweetness and its strength, to make it a sorry failure. Whereas to approach our prayer with joy, as the hart pants after the fountains of water, rejoicing like a giant to run our way, like zealous scholars who wish to learn, feeling proud and privileged to speak to God, looking forward to the opportunity of enriching our souls and laying up treasure in heaven—this is the secret of success in prayer. "Give glory to God with a good heart."

The number of times the royal Psalmist uses the phrase "*in toto corde meo*" ("with

my whole heart"), is very striking, and he bases his doing so on the marvels of divine power as revealed in creation, on God's goodness to him, on the wish, as it were, to rival the saints, in whose presence and company we pray, and on the infinite perfections of God.

We have the same four grounds, and fresh reasons also embraced by these four headings, for praying "with our whole heart." The works of God are enhanced by His redemption of man; His goodness to men is increased by the gift of the Sacraments, and of our Lady as our Mother. "Our conversation is in heaven," and the saints with God are more numerous, more powerful, than of old, for there is the blood of martyrs to plead for us and with us; and though the perfections of God are unchanged and unchangeable—for with God, the Father of lights, there is no change or shadow of an alteration—still in the bright light of the Incarnation these perfections stand out more clearly, attract more sweetly, and

are imaged for our contemplation with greater splendour.

If David, then, prayed "with his whole heart," surely Christians have more ample reason for doing so. Throughout his psalms there is a joyous, enthusiastic ring, while in our prayers there is often no such strain, but all seems an effort, without sweetness, because we approach this holy exercise without delight.

"Come, let us praise the Lord with joy ; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour ; let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to Him with psalms, for He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." "O my spirit, O my heart, we have a great work to do ; there is none more important, none more sublime ; we have to approach the throne of God, to praise His majesty, to render thanks for His mercy, to ask pardon for sins many and grave, to bring favours upon ourselves and upon others. We have to be the mouthpiece of the

Church of God, and our prayer is to swell the chorus of praise that angels and saints are offering by night and by day in heaven above. We are not alone ; our Lady, St. Joseph, and all the saints are with us. Wherefore leave behind all thoughts, all distractions of the world, and offer your sacrifice of praise so acceptable to God. Hold long and sweet converse with your heavenly Father, and apply yourself to that task with attention, with devotion, with joy, and with relish, giving glory to God with a good heart and sanctifying your tithes with joy."

## XXXV

### Holding Fast

WE are told in Holy Scripture that God is a jealous God. He looks upon us as the work of His hands, as creatures who owe all they have and are to their Creator, and therefore He claims us as His own,

and denies emphatically the right of any other to our love and service. He asks as a right for every particle of our time and strength, for our whole heart, for our whole mind, for our whole lives, till the hour of death—God wants it all, for He is a jealous God.

Hence we find strong things said of the need of perseverance. Not those who begin well, but those who continue well to the end, are acceptable in the sight of God. "Abide in My love," says our Lord, for "no man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. Remember Lot's wife. If you continue in My word you shall be My disciples indeed, for he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." And St. Paul's Epistles are full of burning exhortation on this point. "My beloved brethren," he says, "be ye stedfast and immovable, not weary in well-doing, but persevere under chastisement, being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you,



will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."

Let us take first the case of a soul that does not persevere. For a time, perhaps for some years, all went well; prayer fed that soul and the Sacraments were regularly and fervently frequented; it loved God, and gave promise of doing good. Life was passing away, and as each day brought it nearer to eternity, it seemed to grow in wisdom, to increase in merit, to love God more and more. Those years were an education to that soul. It was learning all the time, more and more fully, the claims of God, the end of man, the malice of sin, the value of life, the bliss of heaven.

But then came a change! We know what this means. A boy, for example, who pleases us by his fresh manners, his brightness, his readiness to oblige, suddenly becomes independent and forward, a little rude in speech, thinking himself a man before he is one, and we say of him, "He is changed." So is it with the soul

we are considering. One day a temptation assails it, or some langour steals over it, and there is want of prompt resistance ; the will is weak, and some duty is neglected, some sin committed that leaves its mark, and the change, so slight at first, increases fast ; prayers are laid aside, the Sacraments are approached at irregular intervals, exhortations and warnings are no longer heeded, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. He began to build but did not finish, he grew weary in well-doing, and now walks no more with our Lord.

Let us notice that in this history there are just the elements peculiarly distasteful to our Lord. It is a selling of one's birthright, an unwillingness to brace ourselves for an effort, a want of confidence in the help from above, a neglect of grace, a squandering of accumulated strength, and, above all, a rejection of light. "Father, forgive them," our Lord prayed, "for they know not what they do"; but such souls *do*

know what they do, and our Lord has something against them, for they have fallen from their first fervour.

Call to mind the history of King Solomon. Who was ever so variously gifted, so richly endowed, so laden with blessings as he? The gift of wisdom, and riches and glory, were lavished upon him by God. He built and dedicated a temple most glorious. "He is a saint," as Cardinal Newman says, "ready made; he is in his youth what others are in their age; he is fit for heaven ere others begin their way heavenward. Why should he delay? why tarry the wheels of his chariot? why does he remain longer on earth? Alas! he remains on earth to show us that there might be one thing lacking amidst the multitude of graces; to show that though there be in a man all faith, all hope, all love, all wisdom, though there be an exuberance of merits, it is all but a vanity if one gift be wanting—the gift of perseverance. He was in his youth what others hardly are in age; well were it

had he been in his end what the feeblest of God's servants is in his beginning. For Solomon retained not his comeliness, but withered in his place." And how many children of the Church, with lights and encouragements, with help and protection from on high, turn back within sight of home, no longer run in the race so as to obtain the prize, and lose the things which they have wrought !

Let us next contrast with this the history of a soul that perseveres. Both receive a fair start, but the latter, when difficulties and temptations come, when dryness in spiritual exercises overtakes it, and when the world and its false pleasures begin to allure, is then generous, stedfast, loyal and true, "not as children tossed to and fro, not led aside by the error of the unwise, not like the fool, changeable as the moon." Such souls remember then the strength which God has given them, the kindness lavished upon them, and, bearing in mind that they are soldiers,

go forth against the foe ; they advance and abound in the work of the Lord, they hold fast that which they have, that no other bear away their crown, and they conquer, faithful until death, and they receive the crown of life.

In all this there is precisely what our Lord loves. There is trust in Him to give us strength, there is a holy readiness to try, there is a generous self-sacrifice which does not flinch from pain, there is a noble pride at bearing the name of Christian, and a determination to walk worthy of that high vocation.

Let us pray often for this crowning grace of perseverance, and let us understand that the only way to avoid falling back is to press forward. We must dread all occasions of sin, and acquire a habit of shrinking from the beginnings of temptation. Never speak lightly of sacred things—try to live in the Presence of God. Interest our Lady in your success, pray to her earnestly for it ; and if Mary intercedes for you, the day

of your summons home will find you watching and ready.

## XXXVI

## Some Prayers

## (i) MORNING OFFERING

O MY God, the sun that speaks to us of Thy light and strength, has risen to herald in another day of my life. My God, I hasten to adore Thee, to kneel for Thy blessing, to prostrate myself before Thee as Thy creature and Thy child, to thank Thee for the rest of the night now past, to offer myself to Thee, body and soul, during this day. Thou art my first beginning and my last end : to Thee I owe all things, and without Thee I can do nothing. Thou art my Creator and my Master, and for Thee alone I wish to live, for Thou hast a right to every moment of my time, and, in Thy goodness, Thou deignest to accept

whatever I do. My God, to Thee I give it all, without reserve, and will try to spend to-day as though it were to be my last on earth. May every duty be begun in Thy Name, carried through with Thy gracious help, performed so as to give Thee glory, completed with Thy blessing. Rouse me from all sloth, banish far from me all discouragement, and prompt me often, lest I waste the time that belongs wholly to Thee. Let me every moment bear in mind that Thou, my God, dost see me, so that living in Thy sacred presence, I may do all that my hand findeth to do in such a way as to show my sense of gratitude and fidelity to Thee, my Father, from whom every best and perfect gift descends. Amen.

### (ii) EVENING

Stay with me, Lord, for the day is now far spent, and the night is at hand when no man can work. To Thee I would give an account of my stewardship for to-day,

while into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Accept, O Lord, the work and words of this day, pardon their many blemishes, deal mercifully with Thy servant, and as I close my eyes and ears to sights and sounds of earth, let me know that I am at peace with Thee, ready to face Thee even as my Judge, while I acknowledge Thee as my Saviour. Give me Thy blessing, and may Thy angels have me in their keeping during the watches of the night. With a grateful heart, I acknowledge the many favours received from Thy hands to-day, and if I be spared for yet further labours in Thy vineyard, may Thy loving goodness still feed and support my weakness. The day is finished, and I can work no more. My Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit : Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Amen.

### (iii) BEFORE COMMUNION

My Jesus, when Thou didst come on earth to draw all men to Thyself, and to



rescue souls from the power of sin, Thou didst do all things well and in a manner worthy of a king. It was not enough to speak to us, to live with us, to share our lot, to open heaven to us, and to die that we might one day be with Thee for ever. No, Thy delights are to be with the children of men, all days, to the end, and only the closest possible union with them will satisfy the hunger of Thy heart for the love of sinners. And so, on Thy last night on earth, Thou didst institute this adorable banquet of love and strength, of light and union, of courage and peace, that we might never be separated from Thee, but might ever possess a food, in the strength of which to walk even to the mount of God.

Yes, dear Jesus, it was on the night in which Thou wast betrayed, and didst begin Thy Sacred Passion, that this divine food was first given to us by Thee. Let me never forget this, that whenever I receive Thee in Holy Communion, I may remember it is a memorial

of Thy pains for me, and of my duty to infuse into every hour of my life Thy spirit of self-denial, and never to forget all that Thou hast suffered for me.

Another day of sweet Communion has now dawned for me, and soon I am going to receive Thee. I believe that Thou dwellest in this sacrament of love for my comfort and support ; I love Thee, and am grateful to Thee for this gift, so surpassing hope or thought ; I hope from my Communion to receive much light and strength, and all the graces I need so much, to serve Thee better. I long for the moment when I shall possess Thee within me ; come, Lord Jesus, and have compassion on my weakness. I detest my sins, and have made some effort to prepare my soul to welcome Thee ; but, dear Master, I am not worthy, I am not worthy, I am very unworthy of this high privilege, and only Thy kind words, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," make me bold enough to draw near to receive Thee.

O Mary, my Mother, dear angel, my guardian, St. Joseph, my protector, and all angels and saints of God, pray for me at this time, that my Communion may be one after God's own heart, for my own greater good, for the good of all souls redeemed by the Precious Blood. And now accompany me, as I receive my Lord and so great a Lord, whom heaven and earth cannot contain, into my heart, for He has said : " Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you." Amen.

(iv) AFTER COMMUNION

Behold, O Lord, I have Thee now who hast all things ; I possess Thee who possessest all things ! From Thy throne in heaven, Thou hast come all the way into my poor heart, and I can now say : " My Beloved to me, and I to Him." Whence is this to me, that my Lord should come to me, who am so unworthy of His

regard? With all my heart I adore Thee, dear Jesus, dwelling now within me; I thank Thee for thus giving me Thyself; I welcome Thee with joy and love; I offer Thee my poor gifts, and bid Thee accept my whole self to be Thine, from henceforth and for ever. What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me? What less can I give Thee, dear Lord, than the whole love of my heart, for by this gracious visit Thou dost tell me that for this it is Thou cravest?

And what is it that has made Thee thus give Thyself to me? what does the possession of a gift so great impress upon me? It tells me that Thou lovest me, and art ready to help me along my way. Yes, but more than this. That which is holy Thou dost not give to dogs, neither dost Thou cast pearls before swine. By this divine food Thou dost tell me that I possess an immortal soul, made to Thine image, redeemed by Thy Blood, and destined one day to see Thee face to face for

ever more. This is the true reason of a food so strong, of a visit so intimate, of a union so close and tender.

Thy presence within me, Jesus, speaks to me of the value of my soul, of the presence of enemies who would disfigure and destroy it, of the need of loyal work and keen vigilance to keep it for Thee. Yes, in the strength of this food I will walk in the way of Thy commandments, I will go forth, and fight the foe, and strike many a blow for Thee. Increase my courage that I never lose heart, or do the works of Him that sent me languidly ; increase my love that I may appreciate Thy infinite loving-kindness to me, and make Thee a warm return of love ; increase my union with Thee, that I may ever choose the better part, and take Thee, and Thee alone, as my portion.

Mary, my Mother, and all ye angels and saints of God, unite with me in praising and giving thanks to my Lord for all that He hath rendered unto me this day.

## (v) SHORTER MORNING OFFERING

My Jesus, my best Friend, I welcome Thee to-day ; give me Thy blessing ; keep me close to Thee all day, and give me every grace I shall need. Help me to be very patient and resigned ; give me a store of holy joy and peace. Let me value every thorn Thou givest me from Thy sacred crown. I offer Thee my whole day, with all my pain and all my prayers. Dear Lord, I cannot pray as I would ; I have not strength to pray much ; accept, then, my sacrifice, which, relying on Thy goodness, I venture to offer, for it is all I can give. Come into my heart by a spiritual communion, and make me wholly Thine.

“ O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament divine,  
All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment  
Thine.”

Mary, my Mother, bless me to-day and keep me as thy child.

My angel guardian, protect me, and check me.

St. Joseph, pray for me to-day.

O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer Thee the prayers, work, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy divine heart in the holy Mass. Amen.

### (vi) EVENING

Into Thy hands, dear Lord, I commend myself to night. Another day is over, and Thou hast helped me through it. Pardon whatever faults there may have been, and accept my gratitude for all Thy favours. Give me sleep, dear Lord, to-night, that I may wake refreshed to serve Thee more.

Mary, my Mother, close my eyes, and give me thy blessing.

My angel guardian, spread thy wings around me, and protect me to-night.

St. Joseph, pray for me.

O holy souls in Purgatory, for your benefit I now say this prayer: "Sweet

heart of Mary, be my salvation." (300 days.) Pray for me in return to-night.

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Amen.

## (vii) DURING CONVALESCENCE

### (a) *Morning*

O my God, I offer Thee this day, with all that it may bring. In every hour protect and help me : in every hour teach me to accept all that shall befall me, and to embrace all as a gift from Thee, to be used for Thy glory and for my own good. Give me wisdom to know always how to act ; give me prudence ever to choose the better part ; give me much patience, to control all restlessness, to maintain my peace and joy, to be tender and grateful to all around me.

Mary, my Mother, be near to me to-day, for I need thee. Lead me to thy Son. Amen.



*(b) Evening*

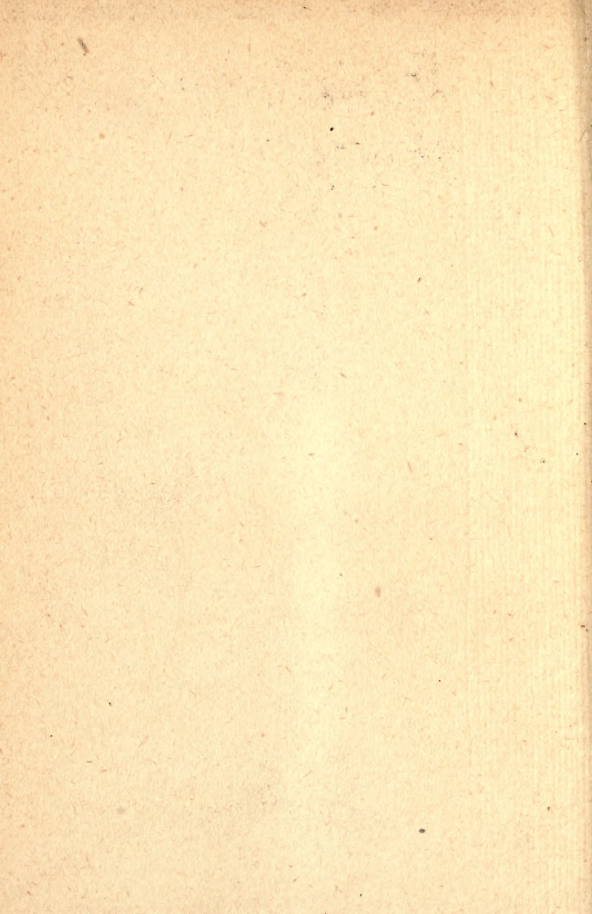
O my God, another day is over, and Thou hast been very good to me. Accept my gratitude for Thy loving care of me, and pardon every sin and imperfection Thou seest in my conduct to-day. Accept the love of my heart, and my desire to serve Thee again to-morrow. Give me now Thy blessing. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul.

Mary, my Mother, my angel guardian, all ye angels and saints of God, protect me while I sleep. Amen.









BX 2373 .S5 E28 1909 SMC  
Eaton, Robert Ormston,  
Auxilium infirmorum  
47235045

